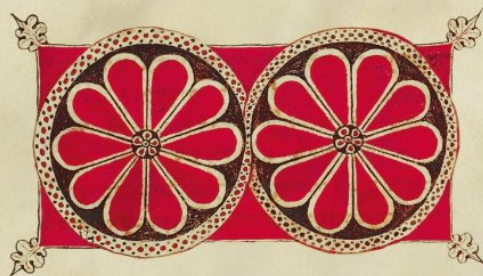




Mark at the Threshold

APPLYING BAKHTINIAN CATEGORIES
TO MARKAN CHARACTERISATION



GEOFF R. WEBB

BRILL

Mark at the Threshold

Biblical Interpretation Series

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Markan Characterisation

By

Geoff R. Webb



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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the Greek text in the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Greek-English New Testament*, and where an English translation is included it is from the New Revised Standard Version or from my own translation.

Citations from ancient Greek texts other than the New Testament are, unless otherwise noted, taken from *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. While the version used (as indicated in the Bibliography) was not the latest, the most recent version is TLG E: A Digital Library of Greek Literature (CD-ROM), University of California, Irvine, 2000.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Bib</i>	Biblica
<i>CBQ</i>	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
<i>EVQ</i>	Evangelical Quarterly
<i>Exp Times</i>	Expository Times
<i>Int</i>	Interpretation
<i>JBL</i>	Journal of Biblical Literature
<i>JR</i>	Journal of Religion
<i>JST</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
<i>JSTSupp</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplementary series
<i>NovT</i>	Novum Testamentum
<i>NTS</i>	New Testament Studies
<i>PMLA</i>	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
<i>SBL</i>	Society for Biblical Literature
<i>SBLDS</i>	Society for Biblical Literature Dissertation Series

In addition, the following standardized abbreviations are used throughout for Bakhtin's works and works from the Bakhtin circle; these follow the standard pattern employed by the Bakhtin Centre at the University of Sheffield. Short titles are used, and for full bibliographic detail, see Bibliography.

<i>AAEP</i>	<i>Art and answerability: early philosophical essays</i>
<i>AH</i>	"Author and hero in aesthetic activity"
<i>BSHR</i>	<i>"The Bildungsroman and its significance in the history of realism"</i>
<i>DI</i>	<i>The dialogic imagination</i>
<i>DLDP</i>	"Discourse in life and discourse in poetry"
<i>DN</i>	"Discourse in the Novel"
<i>EN</i>	"Epic and novel"
<i>FM</i>	<i>The formal method in literary scholarship</i>
<i>FMSS</i>	"The Formal (Morphological) Method, or Scholarly Salieri-ism"
<i>FTC</i>	"Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel"
<i>FCS</i>	"Freudianism: A Critical Sketch"

<i>IT</i>	"The Immediate Tasks Facing Literary-Historical Science"
<i>LS</i>	"Literary Stylistics"
<i>LTLT</i>	"The Latest Trends in Linguistic Thought in the West"
<i>MHS</i>	"Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences"
<i>N70</i>	"From notes made in 1970–71"
<i>MPL</i>	<i>Marxism and the philosophy of language</i>
<i>PDP</i>	<i>Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics</i>
<i>PND</i>	"From the prehistory of novelistic discourse"
<i>PT</i>	"The problem of the text in linguistics, philology..."
<i>RQNM</i>	"Response to a question from the Novyi mir Editorial Staff"
<i>RW</i>	<i>Rabelais and his world</i>
<i>PSG</i>	"The problem of speech genres"
<i>TP1</i>	"Preface to vol. 11 (dramas) of Tolstoy's Collected Works"
<i>TP2</i>	"Preface to vol. 13 (Resurrection) of Tolstoy's Collected Works"
<i>TPA</i>	<i>Toward a philosophy of the act</i>
<i>TRDB</i>	"Toward a reworking of the Dostoevsky book"

INTRODUCTION

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin has, in recent decades, attracted significant interest in most areas of the humanities. This is due in part to Bakhtin's wide-ranging scholarship, covering widely divergent fields, and his continuing impact through the last decade on ever more diverse disciplines such as literary analysis, linguistics, philosophy, the arts (both visual arts and various other media such as film), psychology, social work and social theory, politics, education, and even feminist studies.¹ As a

¹ Examples from literary analysis include, David Amigoni, "Displacing the autobiographical impulse: a Bakhtinian reading of Thomas Carlyle's reminiscences," in Newey, Vincent and Shaw, Philip (eds.), *Mortal pages, literary lives: studies in nineteenth-century autobiography*, Hants, Eng: Scholar, 1996; Tom Cohen, *Ideology and inscription: 'cultural studies' after Benjamin, de Man and Bakhtin*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Cathleen T. McLoughlin, *Shakespeare, Rabelais and the comical-historical*, New York: Peter Lang, 2000; David Duff, *Modern genre theory*, New York: Pearson Education, 2000; R. Bracht Branham, *Bakhtin and the classics*, Evanston, Ill: North-Western University Press, 2002; G. Glen Wickens, *Thomas Hardy, monism and the carnival tradition*, Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2002. A recent example from linguistics is the work of Alison Tate, "Bakhtin, addressivity, and the poetics of objectivity," in Peter Verdonk (ed.), *Literature and the new interdisciplinarity: poetics, linguistics, history*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994. Recent examples from philosophy include Jan Marta, "A linguistic model of informed consent," *The journal of medicine and philosophy*, vol. 21, Feb. '96, 41–60; Brian Walker, "John Rawls, Mikhail Bakhtin, and the praxis of toleration," *Political theory*, Feb 1995, 23–1, 101–127; Harold D. Baker, "Psychoanalysis and ideology: Bakhtin, Lacan, and Zizek," *History of European ideas*, 1995, 20, 499–504. David Shepherd—one of the foremost exponents of Bakhtinian theory in the English-speaking world—recently edited *The contexts of Bakhtin: philosophy, authorship, aesthetics*, Amsterdam: Harwood, 1998; Michael Gardiner, *Critiques of everyday life*, London: Routledge, 2000; Galin Tihanov, *The master and the slave: Lukács, Bakhtin and the ideas of their time*, Oxford: Clarendon, 2000. An example from the arts is Deborah J. Haynes, *Bakhtin and the visual arts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. The application of Bakhtin's thought to psychology is an example of the influence of his ideas, especially since he was largely against psychology. An example is Harold D. Baker, "Psychoanalysis and ideology: Bakhtin, Lacan, and Zizek," *History of European ideas*, Jan 1995, 20. Examples from social work and social theory include Allan Irving and Tom Young, "Paradigm for pluralism: Mikhail Bakhtin and social work practice," *Social work*, vol. 47, 2002; Craig Brandist and Galin Tihanov, *Materializing Bakhtin: the Bakhtin circle and social theory*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000; Michael Mayerfield Bell and Michael Gardiner (eds.), *Bakhtin and the human sciences: no last words*, London: Sage, 1998. It is intriguing that Bakhtin is being applied in the field of politics, especially since his politics are not overt in his works. Examples include Ken Hirschkop, *Mikhail Bakhtin: an aesthetic for democracy*, Oxford: OUP, 1999; Craig Brandist, *The Bakhtin circle: philosophy, culture and politics*, London: Pluto, 2002; Theodore F. Sheckels, *When Congress debates: a Bakhtinian paradigm*, Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2000. Recent examples from

result, as Shepherd comments, it is not surprising that locating “the work of Mikhail Bakhtin in relation to contemporary literary, theoretical, and philosophical discourse is in no way a straightforward proposition.”² Much has been written concerning the relationship between Bakhtin and contemporary literary and hermeneutical theory.³ Even the more recent controversies concerning his scholarship—including the cloud that surrounds his (mis)appropriation of his brother’s academic pedigree, and the allegations of plagiarism of other works,⁴ have not diminished the interest in Bakhtin’s writings. Their impact in the area of biblical studies—although later in emerging—has been steadily increasing, as Barbara Green notes in her incisive analysis of the work of several scholars. She maintains that “Biblical text—whether considered as

the field of education include Timothy J. Lensmire, “Writing workshop as carnival: reflections on an alternative learning environment,” *Harvard educational review*, Winter 1994, 64–4, 371–391; Olga Dysthe, “The multivoiced classroom: interactions of writing and classroom discourse,” *Written communication*, 1996, v. 13, n. 3, 385–425; Regis Bernhardt et al. (eds.), *Curriculum leadership: rethinking schools for the 21st century*, Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1998. In the area of feminist studies, recent examples include Marianne Cave, “Bakhtin and feminism: The chronotopic female imagination,” *Women’s studies*, 18(2/3), 1990, 117–127; Sheryl Stevenson, “Language and gender in transit: feminist extensions of Bakhtin,” in Dale Bauer, and Susan McKinstry (eds.), *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the dialogic*, Albany: University of New York Press, 1991, 181–198; Friederike Eigler, “Feminist criticism and Bakhtin’s dialogic principle: making the transition from theory to textual analysis,” *Women in German yearbook: feminist studies in German literature and culture*, 1995, 11, 189–203.

² Peter I. Barta, Paul Allen Miller, Charles Platter and David Shepherd *Carnivalizing difference: Bakhtin and the other*, Sheffield: Routledge, 2002, 1.

³ The ‘dialogue’ between Bakhtin and other contemporary thinkers was originally canvassed by several scholars, perhaps most notably David Patterson (*Literature and spirit—essays on Bakhtin and his contemporaries*, Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 1988) who discussed *inter alia* Berdyaev, Gide, Heidegger and Foucault. Recently, Barta (et al., *Carnivalizing difference*) examines affinities between Bakhtin and Foucault, suggesting Bakhtin’s superiority at several points; David Shepherd contrasts Bakhtin with Fish, Iser and Jauss in “Bakhtin and the reader” *Bakhtin and cultural theory*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002; Tihanov (*Master and the slave*) contrasts Lukács and Bakhtin (although the contrast between Bakhtin’s approach and the pessimistic view of the novel that Lukács adopts could hardly be more divergent). These three works, each published in the 21st century, are indicative of the continuing dialogue that occurs between the views of Bakhtin and those of other seminal thinkers in the area of literary theory.

⁴ For a considered comment on these issues, see Ken Hirschkop’s “Bakhtin in the sober light of day—an introduction to the second edition,” *Bakhtin and cultural theory*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002. While the debate will no doubt continue for some time, with issues of authorship and interpretation being closely intertwined (especially in relation to the Vološinov texts) the significance of the works of the Bakhtin Circle appears to remain undiminished.

Scripture or not—is vastly illuminated by Bakhtin’s ideas.”⁵ She also notes the range of biblical scholars currently involved in using Bakhtin.⁶ Others advocating the applicability of Bakhtin’s ideas include Stephen Prickett, who maintains that

the Bible not only illustrates Bakhtin’s thesis, but actually provides one of the supreme examples of the way in which discourse arises and takes its meaning from the intersecting of contextual and linguistic boundaries.⁷

It is in part in response to reading David McCracken’s article on Bakhtin and characterisation that this work was commenced in an attempt to apply Bakhtin to Markan characterisation. McCracken proposes that Bakhtinian categories

offer an alternative to the study of biblical character as individual... The alternative is interindividual [sic] character, existing in a text relationally. Such a character is analogous to a person, like a reader who, in reading biblical narratives, is brought to the boundary and becomes part of the dialogic interaction.⁸

Walter Reed lists several major advantages in applying Bakhtin to biblical writings. He notes that variations within the received text of Scripture—which may often be assigned to different sources—may be better explained from a Bakhtinian perspective as indicative of a struggle for dominance among “the different voices, styles, dialects, accents, or

⁵ Barbara Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical scholarship*, Atlanta, Ga: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001, 186.

⁶ Green, (*Mikhail Bakhtin*, 190) notes: “As Craig and Pardes explore the carnival genre, as Newsom works in theory, history, and with the voices in Isaiah and Job, as Polzin works with the angled speakers in narrative, there still remains much more to do. Other Old Testament scholars working explicitly with Bakhtin include Judith Fentress-Williams (1 Samuel), Karen Gale (Genesis), Francisco Garcia-Treto (1 Kings, Amos), Harold Fisch, Herbert Levine, and Carleen Mandolfo (Psalms), Hugh Pypers (DH), Nanette Stahl (law), Seth Sykes (Haggai and Zechariah), Hugh White (Genesis), and Patricia Tull Willey (Isaiah). New Testament scholars who allude to Bakhtin when discussing the gospels are Paul Anderson and David McCracken.” To these can be added Susan Felch and Paul Contino, *Bakhtin and religion: a feeling for faith*, Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2001; and most recently Matthew Vines has considered Markan genre in light of Bakhtin’s work in *The problem of Markan genre: the Gospel of Mark and the Jewish novel*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002.

⁷ Stephen Prickett *Words and the word: language, poetics, and Biblical imagination*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 214.

⁸ David McCracken, “Character in the boundary: Bakhtin’s interindividuality (sic) in biblical narratives” in *Semeia* 63, 1993, 40. McCracken uses the term *interindividual* for Bakhtin’s term *interindividual*.

genres... [that do not merely] rest inertly juxtaposed within a text.”⁹ Reed also suggests the possibility of bridging the ‘gap’ between diachronic and synchronic approaches, in that Bakhtin’s approach

allows the literary critic to attend to the final form of the Bible without complete disregard for the analysis of intermediate stages of the Bible’s formation—or to attend to an intermediate stage without ignoring the final form of the text.¹⁰

Recent work by Juliana Claassens concerns itself with the application of Bakhtin’s ideas to a model for Biblical theology.¹¹

While there is no need, therefore, to justify the use of Bakhtin in Biblical studies, several questions still need to be acknowledged concerning the appropriateness of applying Bakhtinian categories to a literary study of Biblical texts.¹² More general questions relate to whether Bakhtinian theory can be applied to a text as ideologically imbricated as the Bible, when a central tenet of Bakhtin’s thought is that texts can only be interpreted in the context of their historical and political roles.¹³ Other questions surrounding the applicability of Bakhtinian categories to Biblical studies concern Bakhtin’s textuality, which remains a vexed issue. Bakhtin’s works have been translated into English (and championed) predominantly by Clark, Holquist, Emerson, Morson, and Tzvetan Todorov, (among others);¹⁴ with some scholars—Holquist

⁹ Walter L. Reed, *Dialogues of the word: the Bible as literature according to Bakhtin*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, 15.

¹⁰ Reed, *Dialogues of the word*, 15.

¹¹ L. Juliana M. Claassens, “Biblical theology as dialogue: continuing the conversation on Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical theology,” *JBL* 122/1, 2003, 127–144.

¹² For example, the ways in which dialogic interaction of relative voices relates to authoritative word, when Scripture could be seen as monologic and supremely ‘authoritative’. As Reed (*Dialogues of the word*, 14) notes, Bakhtin himself “says very little about the biblical writings;...[and] tends to treat it as official, single-voiced discourse.”

¹³ See Michael Holquist’s critique of Robert Polzin in “Introduction,” *Studies in twentieth century literature*, 9:1, 1984, 11. See also *ETLT*, 41 “*The separation between language and its ideological content is one of the most fundamental errors of abstract objectivism.*” (italics original.)

¹⁴ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984. Michael Holquist was a co-translator of *The dialogic imagination, Art and answerability, Toward a philosophy of the act, Speech genres and other late essays*, and has written extensive interpretative material. Caryl Emerson was involved with translation of *Speech genres and other late essays, The dialogic imagination: four essays, Problems of Dostoevsky’s poetics*, “Preface to vol. 11 (dramas) of Tolstoy’s Collected Works,” and “Preface to vol. 13 (Resurrection) of Tolstoy’s Collected Works,” in *Rethinking Bakhtin: extensions and challenges*, as well as involvement in several other works including *The first hundred years of*

and Clark especially—claiming that the works of Medvedev and Vološinov are effectively Bakhtin's.

The arguments among scholars are vigorous, and despite the considerable amount of words produced, more heat than light has been generated! The evidence involved in the debate goes beyond this present discussion, and for the sake of clarity it is sufficient to note that Bakhtin, Medvedev and Vološinov could be considered to be the inner core of the so-called 'Bakhtin circle', in which there was considerable cross-pollination of ideas. For the sake of convenience, therefore, references will be made to Bakhtin or the Bakhtin circle when discussing any of the works produced under the names of each.

The process of translation itself contributes to the problem, however, since much of Bakhtin's terminology is idiosyncratic, and many terms are notoriously difficult to translate. Bakhtin is often ambiguous in his conceptual framework, his style is 'untidy', his textuality difficult, and there seems to be an absence of unified meaning across the range of his texts. This has also meant that he is usually referred to in translation, rather than reading him in the original text; since translating Bakhtin involves interpreting him—a task requiring an expert knowledge of the Russian language, and of Bakhtin's background, which is a major academic exercise in itself. Most of Bakhtin's concepts are therefore known through his interpretative translators. Holquist and Todorov (and possibly Emerson) remain arguably the definitive interpreters of the Bakhtin circle and were the first to introduce the central term *dialogic* into the title of Bakhtin's works. To the extent that they have interacted with texts of the Bakhtin circle (something which would seem a dialogic inevitability!), they become part of that complex of ideas described as 'Bakhtinian'. The work of the Bakhtin Centre at Sheffield, under the direction of premier Bakhtin scholar David Shepherd, must also be acknowledged as making a significant—and increasing—contribution to the understanding of Bakhtin. Much of the more recent review of Bakhtinian literature in English has involved the Bakhtin Centre. The shift in the political climate of Russia has also resulted in a renewed

Mikhail Bakhtin, and *Mikhail Bakhtin: creation of a poetics*. Gary Saul Morson, as well as cooperatively editing several works, for example with Caryl Emerson: *Rethinking Bakhtin: extensions and challenges*, trans Caryl Emerson, Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1989, and *Mikhail Bakhtin: creation of a poetics*, California: Stanford University Press, 1990, has produced (as editor) *Bakhtin*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. Tzvetan Todorov's *Mikhail Bakhtine: le principe dialogique*, is a seminal work interpreting Bakhtin's dialogical principle.

interest in Bakhtin in *Russian*, and it is likely that Bakhtin studies have yet to reach their zenith! The continuing significance of Bakhtin cannot therefore be underestimated.

A final concern in relation to the applicability of Bakhtin to Biblical studies concerns matters of individual interpretation. The ways in which Bakhtin has been applied reflects as much the understanding of, and interpretation by, those making such application. Many of Bakhtin's terms have therefore attracted a measure of 'fuzziness.'¹⁵ Some scholars would want to restrict some or all Bakhtinian categories to novels in the period of Dostoevsky and later, since they would see Dostoevsky as the first (and greatest) exponent of such concepts.¹⁶ Others have applied complex Bakhtinian concepts such as dialogism in the broadest sense—indeed, sometimes in only one of the ways that Bakhtin articulated.¹⁷ Sometimes, such application of concepts relates to only one period of Bakhtin's thought, thus narrowing the possibilities for a broader appreciation of Bakhtin's concepts.

One of the most difficult problems of Bakhtinian thought concerns the relationship of his early works to his later writings. His 'aesthetics of finalization' as elaborated in "Author and hero in aesthetic activity", changes through the unfinalisability associated with his middle works—and especially *Rabelais and his world*, to a more sombre approach in *The Dialogic Imagination*.¹⁸ If his concept of carnivalisation were considered only in terms of the somewhat anarchic approach of *Rabelais*, it could hardly be applied to aspects of gospel. While some may question the validity of his 1963 additions on carnival to his *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics* (printed decades earlier), Bakhtin seems, in his 'fourth period' to

¹⁵ For example 'polyphony', 'dialogue', and 'heteroglossia'.

¹⁶ For example, Caryl Emerson appears to move toward such a view in *The first hundred years of Mikhail Bakhtin*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, chapter 3. Given that Bakhtin himself placed great emphasis on Dostoevsky as the first exponent of polyphonic novels (*PDP*, 5–46) it is hardly surprising that such restriction would occur.

¹⁷ McCracken, "Character," 29–42.

¹⁸ "Bakhtin advances the term *unfinalizability* (*nezavershennost*) as an all-purpose carrier of his conviction that the world is not only a messy place, but is also an open place." (Morson and Emerson *Prosaics*, 36). The nature of unfinalizability is significant in relation to characterisation since, from a Bakhtinian perspective, "[o]ne conventional idea that must be discarded, which Bakhtin earlier attacked in 'The problem of content' is the concept of the work of art as a finished thing, a hermetic unity. Insofar as the work continues to live, it must be engaged in dialogue, which is possible only when the work is still open and capable of interaction: the work of art is never finished." (Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics*, 243.)

have returned to several of his earlier concepts, and selectively reworked his best ideas in a kind of synthesis which raises still more questions.

In light of such concerns, then, it becomes necessary to recognise that any application of Bakhtinian categories to Markan studies can only be an interpretative appropriation of Bakhtin's ideas. Ideally, such appropriation needs to be in the context of dialogue with other scholars: as Green perceptively observes,

less and less can individuals working alone manage the project... [S]cholars will have to work collaboratively and will presumably find it exhilarating in ways that solitary work—for all its joys is not.¹⁹

It does seem appropriate, however, to consider some of Bakhtin's categories in relation to Mark's Gospel, especially in relation to characterisation, since the powerful literary critical tools discovered in Bakhtin's writings also provide for diachronically perceptive analytical tools.²⁰ I will briefly introduce some of the key terms and concepts here before developing my understanding of a fruitful Bakhtinian method for exploring Mark in the next chapter. An approach that recognises the difficulties, that examines Bakhtinian categories with an acknowledgment of a perspective of development over time,²¹ and that maintains a necessary humility and openness to continually re-examine Bakhtin's ideas and be examined by them, will serve the needs of application to biblical analysis.

What *can* Bakhtin's categories promise, therefore, in relation to Markan characterisation? How do Bakhtinian categories such as 'chronotope' help to avoid the arbitrary distinction between diachronic and synchronic approaches to character?²² Is there scope to consider

¹⁹ Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 189.

²⁰ Bakhtin maintains that "[t]o distort the nature of the utterance or to fail to consider the peculiarities of generic subcategories of speech in any area of linguistic study leads to perfunctoriness and excessive abstractness, distorts the historicity of the research and weakens the link between language and life." (*PSG*, 63)

²¹ For this reason, Ken Hirschkop claims it is a "methodological necessity... particularly true for Bakhtin... to privilege some texts and formulations... over others... to endorse certain statements and reject others." Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd (eds.), *Bakhtin and cultural theory*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989, 20.

²² Francis J. Moloney ("Life, healing and the Bible: a Christian challenge," *Pacifica* 8, 1995, 318) makes the valid point that "the theological message which must be traced in the text, speaking to the Christian world *in front of the text*, cannot be properly understood, unless one comes to grips with the world *behind the text*." See also Moloney's *Beginning the good news: a narrative approach*, Biblical Studies 1, Homebush: St Paul Publications, 1982, 19–42. Also, Norman Petersen's portrait-mirror-window analogy in *Literary criticism for*

characters dialogically, and if so, at what levels? Does the essentially ‘oral’ nature of Mark make it a more suitable candidate (than other Gospels for example) for applying Bakhtinian categories, especially Bakhtin’s ‘speech-genres’? To what extent do Bakhtin’s considerations of genre, and especially of genre-memory, provide a helpful alternative to the practice of seeking to determine the ‘mimetic’ character of the Gospel in relation to single genres as paradigms for Mark? Is it necessary to see each of the canonical Gospels as reflecting similar literary concerns, or is it possible that the generic contacts and influences behind Mark are different from the other three Gospels? How does the influence of carnival—at a literary (carnavalesque) level and otherwise—anchor Mark within the milieu of the common people? Or, in what sense can Mark be considered to be a ‘vulgar’ gospel?

Potentially, Bakhtinian categories provide an alternative to existing approaches to characterisation that may avoid the arbitrary distinction between diachronic and synchronic approaches.²³ Morson and Emerson comment helpfully at this point:

Historicity... cannot be equated with mere diachrony... For diachrony can be, and often is, nothing but a series of synchronic slices, with no intelligible historical links. Or at times, it is a sort of synchrony sliced sideways, a system that unfolds over time in a systemic and systematic way.²⁴

While the Aristotelian rhetorical triangle of author, text and reader has seen progressive shifts in emphasis in recent hermeneutics, Bakhtin could be seen as restoring the harmony by placing author, text and reader on a more equal footing through his dialogics. Indeed, Bakhtin blurs the traditional distinctions between the three in terms of the reading and writing processes. From this point, the term ‘hearing-reader’ will

New Testament critics, Guides to biblical scholarship New Testament series, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978, 24–28.

²³ S.C. Barton, (*Discipleship and family ties in Mark and Matthew*, SNTS 80, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 16) considers that “[t]he crux of the matter revolves around the question, are the gospels historical *sources*, the careful ordering and sifting of which enables us to go behind them to the solid bedrock of persons and events in history, or are they texts of a predominantly narrative kind whose meaning lies in the creative interaction between text and reader?” The further polarisation of these two basic paradigms is invidious. I would rather argue that the two approaches could be likened to ‘climbing the summit’ of the text from opposite sides of the mountain. Neither can gain a full appreciation of the mountain as a whole *until they make use of the experience of the other*.

²⁴ Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: creation of a prosaics*, California: Stanford University Press, 1990, 44.

be used to designate readers throughout time (whether first readers, who would mostly have *heard* the text read to them, or subsequent readers, who may or may not have been literate) who really *hear* the text. This term is an attempt to approximate Bakhtin's understanding of the listener who

perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, [and]...simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it...for the entire duration of the process of listening and understanding.²⁵

Throughout this work, the hearing-reader may appear often to be the ideal reader; more exploration needs to take place concerning different potential hearing-readers, including consideration of distinctions between a "first" hearing-reader and contemporary hearing-readers, and the possibilities for "resisting" readers to carnivalise the intent of the author (or subsequent interpreters).

While character may be shaped by the hearing-reader, the balance must always be maintained, however, between the influence of author, hearing-reader, and the text itself. Thus the author may engage in dialogue with the hearing-reader in shaping character, especially through such authorial techniques as a word-with-a-sideward-glance.²⁶ The importance of the text itself cannot be ignored, either, since characters are

products of 'objective' social forces,...sensitive to important structural variants of a particular genre...and to different genres...A character is always determined by the particular text in which he [sic] participates.²⁷

Petersen's helpful analogy to describe the various (often polarised) approaches to Scripture—that of the window, painting and mirror²⁸—may therefore have a fourth possibility in light of Bakhtin's categories. Consider the concept of an *interactive web-site*, which picks up the concerns of dialogic criticism: the web-site is never 'finalised,'²⁹

²⁵ PSG, 68.

²⁶ While this term will be discussed more extensively in the next chapter below, with various examples in subsequent chapters, it refers primarily to the authorial tendency to anticipate a hostile response and undercut it.

²⁷ Anthony Wall, "Characters in Bakhtin's theory" *Studies in twentieth century literature* 9:1, 1984, 47.

²⁸ Petersen (*Literary criticism*, 19) used these categories to define the difference between historical-critical methodologies and literary-critical methodologies.

²⁹ A key concern of dialogic criticism!

but is constantly responsive to the dynamics of interaction. Visitors effectively ‘update’ the web-site by their interaction with it. Mark, because of its indefinite ending, is therefore a most suitable candidate within the New Testament for consideration as an ‘interactive web-site’. An overview of the whole does not preclude the possibility that specific topics (‘windows’) can be opened up to give information not in the immediate ‘window’ of the text. Each hearing-reader visiting the site is drawn in to ‘complete’ the story each time. The long history of scholarship associated with Mark has provided many vital contributions to understanding the Gospel; but the same scholarship could also be said to have ‘changed’ the text, since each ‘interaction’ has entered into dialogue with it.³⁰

Bakhtin suggests that as

a work gains in significance...it enters *great time*. But the work cannot live in future centuries without having somehow absorbed past centuries as well. If it had belonged *entirely* to today (that is, were a product only of its own time) and not a continuation of the past or essentially related to the past, it could not live in the future.³¹

Characters always remain within the ideological world of the hearing-reader, therefore, and remain unfinalisable in the sense that each reading and re-reading of the text will ‘shape’ the character in new and unforeseen ways.³²

Dialogic criticism³³ is emerging as a major alternative to other literary critical approaches in the study of such divergent fields as Dostoevsky’s novels, Rabelais and his medieval counterparts, and extending right

³⁰ Reed (*Dialogues of the word*, 16) comments helpfully that “the process of canonization is never truly finished, as new communities of interpretation inevitably subject...books to different constructions of relatedness and to new distributions of authority among and within them.”

³¹ *RQNM*, 4. Bakhtin also notes that authors and their “contemporaries see, recognize, and evaluate primarily that which is close to their own day. The author is a captive of his (sic) epoch, of his (sic) own present. Subsequent times liberate...from this captivity, and literary scholarship is called upon to assist in this liberation.” (*RQNM*, 5). The concept of great time is also expounded in *PSG*.

³² Wall (“Characters”, 49), comments that “[t]he character, as a result, once created, lives on in the text not through the power of his creator but...by virtue of the life given to him by each new reading. We can see character as a sort of latent force in the very pages of a closed text, a force that is reborn with the reader’s participation...”

³³ Dialogic criticism reflects the views of the Bakhtin circle—Bakhtin himself, and his colleagues Matvei Isaevich Kagan, Pavel Nikolaevich Medvedev, Lev Vasilievich Pumpianskii, Ivan Ivanovich Sollertinskii and Valentin Nikolaevich Vološinov—and uses the terminology and concepts developed by the Bakhtin circle. However, dialogic critics

back to studies of Graeco-Roman ‘classical’ writings. Dialogic criticism provides a promising approach for the study of Markan character because it radically changes the way in which characters are viewed. Rather than a psychological view of character (which is difficult to project back onto ancient patterns of writing),³⁴ or views that promote character primarily as a structuring element in story, or even studies considering character as a plot construct,³⁵ dialogic criticism sees characters as voice sources in the text.³⁶ The interaction that occurs among such voices, together with the interaction with the ‘voice’ of the addressee, and even the interaction with other text-voices, is the locus of study in a Bakhtinian critical analysis of character, as will be discussed below in the development of a methodology for examining Markan character.

This shift in emphasis seems to be particularly appropriate for the study of character in ancient writings such as the Gospels. Most ancient writers do not appear to have developed complex characterisation.³⁷ Even the use of interior monologue as a method for drawing character was used sparingly.³⁸ Biblical characters are, as Auerbach describes them,

reflect significant variations in emphases, ranging from Marxist to deconstructionist views; indicative of the heterogeneity of thought emanating from the Bakhtin circle.

³⁴ For example, E.M. Forster, (*Aspects of the novel*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), whose round/flat distinction in relation to character (on the basis of the portrayal of a character’s inner life) is used extensively although the application of such a typology to ancient texts may be less appropriate than for contemporary texts. Stephen H. Smith (*The lion with wings—a narrative-critical approach to Mark’s gospel*, The Biblical Seminar, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, chapter 2) follows Forster’s typology, whereas Robert Alter (*The art of biblical narrative*, New York: Basic Books, 1981) has critiqued Forster’s typology.

³⁵ For example, Adele Berlin (*Poetics and interpretation of biblical narrative*, Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983) uses a typology of degrees of characterisation, but sees character as primarily a product of the plot.

³⁶ Theodore Weeden, (*Mark: traditions in conflict*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971, 14) for example, is not referring to characterisation or character portrayal “in the modern sense, but to the presentation of characters as a medium through which an ancient author dramatizes the theses of his composition.”

³⁷ Classical characters are often considered to be invariably ‘static’ and ‘opaque’, with a monolithic changeless quality. Development within a character is considered to be a relatively recent concept. Such opacity in characterisation may function as ironic understatement, developing a tension between the detachment of the narrator’s tone and the engagement that the reader imagines is taking place within the characters’ minds. Part of the power of characterisation in saga and epic is its economy of presentation, as R. Scholes, and R. Kellogg (*The nature of narrative*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966, 171–174) note helpfully.

³⁸ Some authors such as Homer, Virgil, Ovid and Xenophon of Ephesus used interior monologue but its use was not widespread in ancient literature. There was a

“fraught with background”³⁹ and distinguished from others in ancient literature because Old Testament heroes were in a process of learning, whereas the Greek heroes were in a state of being.⁴⁰ For these reasons, classical characterisation is in danger of being misinterpreted when compared with modern characterisation. Without an understanding of the reading conventions and cultural processes assumed by ancient literature, it is impossible to determine the extent to which ancient readers may have constructed fuller characters than is currently thought.⁴¹ Malbon sees a more complex pattern in Markan characterisation, and this gives greater integrity to the Markan portrayal of character:

The disciples are not simply the ‘bad guys’; and the women do not simply oppose them or parallel them. Rather, the women characters (along with the crowd and several exceptional male characters) supplement and complement the Markan portrayal of the disciples, together forming, as it were, a composite portrait of the fallible followers of Jesus.⁴²

tendency in antiquity to consider thought simply as speech without the sound. Thus, characterisation through internal dialogue amounts to characterisation through rhetoric (See Scholes and Kellogg, *Nature of narrative*, 177–186.)—a feature that separates ancient writings from modern patterns, in which the internal monologue is a stream of consciousness based on psychologically orientated patterns. (See Scholes and Kellogg, *Nature of narrative*, chapter 5.)

³⁹ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: the representation of reality in western literature*, trans. William Trask, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, 12.

⁴⁰ See Scholes and Kellogg, *Nature of narrative*. For example, Achilles is presented as a hero (and therefore does not qualify as truly mimetic), with anger as his dominant trait—he is in a state of *being*, according to Auerbach. By contrast, King David is as much anti-hero as hero; shown to be flawed, yet his response to Nathan’s oracle shows him as capable of learning from his mistakes. Characters in Graeco-Roman literature—as well as possessing other traits—all had the quality of nobility or baseness. As Jerry Camery-Hoggatt (*Irony in Mark’s gospel: text and subtext*, SNTS 72, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) indicates, characters were not morally neutral. The reader assumes specific moral norms against which character traits are judged. However, this does not apply so readily to Old Testament characters, who do not illustrate an ethical ideal or virtue, although they may be held up as models for certain exemplary behaviours, as Marianne Meye Thompson notes (“God’s voice you have never heard, God’s form you have never seen: the characterisation of God in the gospel of John,” *Semeia* 63, 1993, 179).

⁴¹ F.W. Burnett (“Characterisation and reader construction of character in the gospels,” in *Semeia* 63, 1993, 3) notes that “what appears to modern critics as a minimum of characterisation may have been read in maximal terms by contemporary auditors and readers.” Burnett also comments helpfully on the importance of both textual indicators and the reading process for characterisation.

⁴² Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Fallible followers: women and men in the gospel of Mark,” *Semeia* 28, 1983, 33.

As well as evidencing greater complexity than is often considered, Markan characterisation follows the pattern of Old Testament narrators in sometimes indicating a judgement about the characters in terms of their relation to the paradigmatic figures in their stories—in this case, Jesus. In so doing, Mark engages a level of dialogue with the hearing-reader that can be helpfully considered using Bakhtin's categories.

For Bakhtin, character is always unfinalised, just as it is also always interindividual; a character is a point of convergence (or divergence) of voices within and between texts which actualises differently with every reading of a given text as the hearing-reader identifies and stratifies the voices in the text. The degree of unfinalisability determines whether an interindividual character should be considered to be 'major' or 'minor'.⁴³ Bakhtin emphasises the social nature of language, maintaining that meaning is found in the dialogic exchange of language. Bakhtin believed that language and texts were more than the interplay of signifiers; rather, the socially constituted fabric of language links various voices dynamically to one another. Language acquisition is therefore the assimilation of others' voices, which we in turn reflect to others through our mode of discourse. We learn our language by assimilating the voices of others, and we reflect those voices back in modes of discourse. This in turn leads us to Bakhtin's metalinguistics, in which the sphere of individual utterances is comprised of a speaker's intent and listener's response, linked together through stable, yet often unconscious speech-genres.

Such speech genres thus become a partial response to the tension between orality and writtenness, since Bakhtin maintains speech genres are foundational to all (subsequent) literary genres. He draws a distinction between

primary (simple) and secondary (complex) speech genres... Secondary (complex) speech genres—novels, dramas, all kinds of scientific research, major genres of commentary, and so forth—arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication (primarily written)... During the process of their formation, they absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres that have taken form in unmediated speech communion. These primary genres are altered

⁴³ Wall, ("Characters", 50) comments helpfully: "Minor characters, as distinguished from major characters, would be those whose number of constitutive voices could easily be counted. For the major character[s], such an exercise would be futile because of ... [their] complexity."

and assume a special character when they enter into complex ones. They lose their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others.⁴⁴

Bakhtin believed that among such secondary (complex) speech genres, the novel was the most adaptable. Indeed, he made claims for the novel that exceeded the breadth given to it by most literary critics, seeing it more as a force—‘novelness.’ The capacity of the novel to survive and evolve was partly due to its ability to reflect the diversity of voices of this dialogic sphere—for which he coined the term ‘heteroglossia’. Such popular styles of discourse as the novel have as their source an ancient ‘carnavalesque’ sense of the world, wherein the official seriousness of ‘authoritative discourse’ is subverted by unofficial forms of language. Bakhtin’s dialogics, which sees language as a stratified (though ever-changing) system of almost infinitely fragmented languages, in turn subverts ‘monologic’ views of language.

In terms of a study of the Gospels, Bakhtin saw much of the New Testament writings as arising within the sphere of the precursor of the novel genre.⁴⁵ While his claims are illustrative rather than systematic (as indeed tends to be his whole approach to genre considerations!), they are helpful in situating the gospel within the milieu of the ‘common people’ rather than with the educated elite.⁴⁶ Bakhtin’s rather quaint anthropomorphic term ‘genre-memory’ does, however, provide an intriguing possibility for an understanding of genre in relation to

⁴⁴ *PSG*, 62–63.

⁴⁵ *PDP*, 111.

⁴⁶ The work on Markan genre has been extensive, with some scholars focussing on classical literature, such as Vernon Robbins (*Jesus the teacher—a socio-rhetorical interpretation of Mark*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984, in which he argues for a coalescence of Graeco-Roman traditions relating to philosopher-teachers and their disciples, with Jewish prophetic/apocalyptic traditions), and shows the considerable use made in Mark of rhetorical and narrative structures characteristic of Graeco-Roman *memorabilia*; Whitney Taylor Shiner, (*Follow me! Disciples in Markan rhetoric*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1995) who shows from the literature of ‘high culture’ that the disciples function rhetorically to create a two-level narrative world into which the reader is drawn to discover the hiddenness of the true reality of Jesus’ identity, as against the disciples’ inability to comprehend), and Dennis MacDonald (*The Homeric epics and the Gospel of Mark*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), focus on classical literature (especially, though not exclusively Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*) in exploring possible genre comparisons. Others, such as Mary-Ann Tolbert (*Sowing the gospel—Mark’s world in literary-historical perspective*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989, who, on the basis of Markan language and syntax, proposed a link between Mark and Graeco-Roman popular romances (‘erotic novels’!), especially that of Xenophon of Ephesus) look to popular literature—especially the romance novel—as possible generic paradigms.

Mark: that an author sees reality with the eyes of the genre.⁴⁷ ‘Genre memory’ involves a certain way of seeing and understanding, as well as definitive formal characteristics, strategies and expectations. Bernstein makes the point that genre memories work as powerfully in mass culture as in great literature.⁴⁸ Thus, Mark’s ‘genre-memory’ would be shaped by a faith-perspective, as well as by literary considerations.

Bakhtin also argues that there was a rise of a new genre that he calls the *menippea*⁴⁹—his abbreviation for *menippean satire*—which developed around the time of early Christianity, and which had a profound influence on subsequent literature:

The basic narrative genres of ancient Christian literature—‘Gospels’... developed within the orbit of the *menippea*... Christian narrative literature (independently of the influence of carnivalized *menippea*) was also subjected to direct carnivalization... Thus ancient Christian narrative literature (including that which was canonized) is also permeated by elements of the *menippea* and carnivalization.⁵⁰

Bakhtin’s claims merit closer attention to determine the extent to which his ideas on the influence of the *menippea* and carnivalisation are valid for Mark. However, his stress on the greater significance of *generic traditions* over individual *genre-models*, is an important potential breakthrough in comparative genre analysis of the Gospels. Carnival influences are evident throughout the Gospel, and contribute to an understanding of the characters, as well as key motifs that have an impact upon the characters, such as the secrecy motif and even the passion itself. The ultimate carnival inversion is where Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is crucified. Carnival also serves to blur the generic origins of the Gospel.

⁴⁷ *FM*, 134.

⁴⁸ Michael Andre Bernstein, *Bitter carnival: resentment and the abject hero*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992, 178.

⁴⁹ The term takes its name from Menippus of Gadara. Although there is little extant evidence of his satires, the term *saturae menippeae* was used in Rome in the first century BCE. *Menippea* could best be described as a ‘rogue’ genre that tends to combine with, penetrate, or absorb other genres. Bakhtin’s custom was to refer to *menippean satire* as simply *menippea*. In accordance with his custom, the terms will be used interchangeably. Carnivalisation is Bakhtin’s term for the transposition into literature of the phenomenon of carnival—a kind of folk-festival (e.g. the Saturnalia) involving elements of inversion of hierarchical and cultural norms, collision of ‘worlds’, and breaching of spatial and bodily barriers.

⁵⁰ *PDP*, 135.

For Bakhtin, all existence, meaning, words and thoughts enter into dialogic relationship, exhibiting intertextuality in both time and space. From this comes Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope (literally, 'time-space')—the spatio-temporal matrix that shapes any narrative. Chronotope, in Bakhtinian terms is a basic unit of literary analysis. "We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature."⁵¹ Specific chronotopes have some measure of correspondence to particular genres that themselves represent particular world-views, as will be further considered in the next chapter below.

Within such a spatio-temporal matrix, dialogism—the Bakhtinian term for the primary, comprehensive rôle of dialogue within discourse—structures the action of the narrative, dissolving the unities of character and plot so that plot is merely the motivation underlying the dialogic interaction between interindividual characters.⁵² Bakhtin's dialogism provides the opportunity to give due weight to the episodic nature of Mark, in that it comprises individual episodes to a much greater extent than most modern literature. Although these episodes have been placed into a chronologically sequenced narrative, issues of narrative continuity and thematic unity are essentially modern constructs,⁵³ but Bakhtin's work could provide a more helpful conceptual framework for understanding characterisation in the Gospel. Specifi-

⁵¹ *FTC*, 84.

⁵² Hirschkop and Shepherd, *Bakhtin*, 47–50. McCracken, (*Character*, 36) provides a helpful summary of Bakhtin's dialogical approach to characterisation. He maintains that character "...is relatively free and independent rather than closed, limited and strictly defined from an objective authorial position... [Character] exists in dialogic relation with other characters... [and] is composed not simply of ingredients but is marked by what Bakhtin calls "transgression", a term that designates elements of consciousness that are external to it but are absolutely necessary for its being, or more precisely, its co-being... [Character] exists in a real present, in a dramatic contemporaneity with the reader and not in the distant past, and this constitutes a dialogic relationship with the reader. It is this contemporaneity that makes Martha's suspension in... unresolved narrative so powerful for us as readers... [Character] is something that the author tends towards speaking *with*, rather than speaking *about*... Biblical narrators... often withhold evaluation of character and action,... [but] dialogue—the activity of response—contributes an unusually large part of biblical narrative... [Character] exists in discourse."

⁵³ Whitney Shiner ("Creating plot in episodic narrative: *The Life of Aesop* and the Gospel of Mark," in *Ancient fiction and early Christian narrative*, 176) suggests helpfully that "[e]pisodic narrative needs to be appreciated on its own terms if we are to be able to understand the episodic narratives of the ancients. It has different conventions from modern continuous narrative, but skilfully employed it can achieve effects as dramatic or as subtle as those created in the continuous narrative style."

cally, the dialogical interaction at the threshold between interindividual characters is the ultimate consequence of Jesus' divine identity:⁵⁴ each character is brought to the threshold,⁵⁵ and in the course of dialogical interaction with Jesus—directly or indirectly—makes a life-changing decision based on a response to, and understanding of, who Jesus is. Simultaneously, because of the dramatic contemporaneity of the dialogue, the hearing-reader is also called into dialogic interaction at the threshold.⁵⁶ However, what becomes apparent is that the christological significance of Jesus is repeatedly missed by characters at the threshold. Thus, even those who sometimes respond positively (such as the disciples) will be engaged in a continuing process of being taken to the threshold of dialogic interaction.

Minor characters (and especially the unnamed ones) may tend to respond more positively, but they engage in one encounter that does not imply subsequent testing of their faith-response. Thus, although interindividuality is apparent, these characters have a limited function compared with other characters. The disciples may not understand, but they do not reject Jesus in the way that the Jewish leaders do. Even the disastrous collapse of the discipleship narrative is not final; as Clark and Holquist state, "Characters in a novel are not like flies, immobilized in the object-like amber of the text that surrounds them."⁵⁷ The ending of Mark calls the disciple (within and without the text) to return to the threshold.

An examination of Markan character from a Bakhtinian perspective should therefore take into account not only the dialogue of interindividual characters, but the dialogue of various speech genres (primary and secondary)⁵⁸ and the influence of carnival as a phenomenon and as a literary 'idiom'. Bakhtin warns against taking a

one-sided orientation toward primary genres [that] inevitably leads to a vulgarization of the whole problem (behavioural linguistics is an extreme example). The very interrelations between primary and secondary genres and the process of the historical formation of the latter shed light on the

⁵⁴ Which indicates dependence on historical-critical contributions to christology.

⁵⁵ Thus form-criticism's conflict story category becomes important for many dialogical interactions.

⁵⁶ At this point of the process, reader-response analyses have particular cogency.

⁵⁷ Clark and Holquist, *Bakhtin*, 243.

⁵⁸ Primary and secondary speech genres are a major issue for Bakhtin, as will be discussed in the next chapter below.

nature of the utterance (and above all on the complex problem of the interrelations among language, ideology and world-view).⁵⁹

We turn first, therefore, to an examination of several of these critical categories and how they apply to characterisation—dialogism, the significance of secondary speech-genres within such dialogic interaction (including Bakhtin’s concept of genre-memory), and the influence of carnival and carnivalesque elements; before considering how these categories apply to characterisation within an episodic work such as Mark’s Gospel.

The understanding of Bakhtinian categories will always be a matter of dialogue with those categories, and this in turn needs to be subjected to the broad range of scholarship concerning Bakhtin. The content of the next chapter provides the background to the methodology or approach that is adopted in subsequent chapters. Part of the humility required in using Bakhtin, as referred to earlier by Green,⁶⁰ is the struggle for personal understanding that involves a constant process of revisiting Bakhtin. The application of Bakhtinian categories⁶¹ involves the need to indicate how Bakhtin’s categories are understood within this research, and how they have therefore created a ‘frame of reference’ for Markan characterisation, as explicated in the passages selected. This ‘frame of reference’ is outlined in the next chapter.

⁵⁹ *PSG*, 62.

⁶⁰ Barbara Green (*Mikhail Bakhtin*, 185) wisely reminds us that “the thought of one person does not come prefabricated and ready-made for the projects of another. Each of us must struggle for her or his own understanding.”

⁶¹ Even the concept of ‘applying’ Bakhtin is as much a matter of exploring how Bakhtinian insights and derived strategies may work in relation to the Gospel.

CHAPTER ONE

BAKHTINIAN CATEGORIES—DIALOGUE, GENRE-MEMORY, CHRONOTOPE AND CARNIVAL

Bakhtin, Dialogue & Mark

First-level dialogue

At a fundamental level, all language and thought is dialogical: each word or thought presupposes an answer.¹ Dialogisation occurs when a word, discourse, language or culture becomes relativised, and de-privileged. Authoritative or absolute discourse does not permit dialogisation. The question of whether the Gospel represents authoritative discourse, or whether it permits dialogisation, is central to this discussion: that is, whether Markan characterisation evidences dialogisation throughout the Gospel.

Central to the concept of dialogue is the understanding that each person, although having irreducible moral status, cannot be considered to have a consciousness in isolation. Thus, thought and utterance can only occur between people, with each individual's consciousness being intersubjective. As Bakhtin puts it, "The word lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien context."² In considering characterisation, therefore, it is necessary to conceive of characters as essentially interindividual,³ with each 'character zone'

¹ Each thought or utterance also involves a political and socio-cultural context, however, and therefore pure Bakhtinian categories are a contradiction in terms, as evidenced by the many ways these categories have been applied, each time reflecting the socio-political or cultural bias of the person invoking them! Bakhtin (*DN*, 300) comments that "[t]he social and historical voices populating language... which provide language with its particular concrete conceptualizations, are organized... into a structured stylistic system that expresses the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of his epoch." By extension, there will inevitably be a bias reflected where Bakhtin's categories are applied to biblical texts, although such bias will also vary depending on the person applying them.

² *DN*, 284.

³ McCracken ("Character," 29–42) either coins his own term 'interindividual,' or has misread Bakhtin's term.

functioning as a bearer of a 'language' comprised of a set of sound and ideological variations. Indeed, Bakhtin locates the motivation for characterisation in the representation of language.⁴ Thus, he comments that

character zones... [are] formed from the fragments of character speech... from various forms for hidden transmission of someone else's speech, from those invasions into authorial speech of others' expressive indicators (ellipsis, questions, exclamations). Such a character zone is the field of action for a character's voice, encroaching in one way or another upon the author's voice.⁵

In the course of developing a methodology for applying Bakhtinian categories, I have found it necessary to define different levels of dialogue. First-level dialogue is that which occurs at this most basic level between two characters, and which is the most common understanding of the term 'dialogue.' This, then, is the first level of a three-level schema proposed here. It also corresponds with the first sense in which Bakhtin uses dialogue; namely that every utterance is dialogic by definition.⁶ Such dialogue requires the concept of character-zones, since to a certain extent an 'individual' character can never exist: each character-zone involves speech fragments which, however stratified, cannot exist independently of other character-zones, and presupposes dialogic relationship.⁷

It is this level of dialogue that occurs at the boundary between two interindividual characters.⁸ With each interindividual character there must always exist the *possibility* of change as a result of dialogic inter-

⁴ Simon Dentith, *Bakhtinian thought: an introductory reader*, London: Routledge, 1995. Note that such a motivation relates more to characterisation in the novel, rather than character-portrayal within essentially 'historical' works.

⁵ *DN*, 317.

⁶ "Consequently the utterance depends upon the participants' real material participation in one and the same section of being, and gives ideological expression and subsequent ideological development to this material communality." (*DLDP*, 11, italics original).

⁷ Characters are, therefore, essentially "zones of influence which infiltrate...other zones. A character is both a point of convergence and a point of emanation for social voices in the text." Wall, "Characters," 47. The concept of stratification of speech will be further considered below.

⁸ The concept of a boundary between interindividual characters is difficult: it could be argued that there could be no true 'boundary' by definition. However, if dialogue occurs between two 'character-zones', there can be considered to be a threshold encounter, and thus some sort of 'boundary'. Bakhtin comments "...[E]ach of the two persons would be a consciousness at a specific point in the history of defining itself through the choice it has made—out of all the possible existing languages available to it at that moment—of a discourse to transcribe its intention in *this specific exchange*." (*DI*, XX)

action with the other, since characters in a Bakhtinian sense can only be considered to be ‘alive’ to the extent that they remain incomplete and unfinalised. At this boundary between interindividual characters, then, occurs a crisis point at which one or other (or both) of the interindividual characters is brought to a threshold⁹—a point at which choice exists within the dialogic interaction to accept or reject the ideological construct proposed by the other; and thus for such an interindividual character to change.

Thus each will seek, by means of intonation, pronunciation, lexical choice, gesture, and so on, to send out a message to the other with a minimum of interference from the otherness constituted by pre-existing meanings...and the otherness of the intentions present in the other person in the dialogue.¹⁰

Such dialogue provides for multiple forms of conceptualisation of the world to occur. The resultant ideological saturation and stratification that occurs gives rise to the second level of dialogue, which is connected with Bakhtin’s related concept of heteroglossia.¹¹

Second-level dialogue

Central to second-level dialogue is the concept of heteroglossia—meaning ‘differentiated speech’—defined by Bakhtin as

another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of *double-voiced discourse*. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the implied author.¹²

⁹ More than any other character group, the characterisation of the disciples benefits from Bakhtin’s categories: the disciples can be seen as *interindividual* with Jesus, and are repeatedly brought to the threshold of dialogic interaction with him. Examination of the disciples’ frequent failure to understand may also benefit from a consideration of Bakhtin’s concept of carnivalisation (the tendency for subversion and inversion of the normal social order).

¹⁰ Holquist, in *DI*, XX.

¹¹ Morson and Emerson (*Prosaics*, 130–1) offer this schema of the three senses in which Bakhtin used the term ‘dialogue’: “[D]ialogue as a global concept, as a view of truth and the world...[is] the third sense of dialogue...[T]he first sense of dialogue, according to which *every* utterance is by definition dialogic...[T]he second sense of dialogue...allows some utterances to be dialogic and some to be nondialogic (or monologic).” My second level dialogue approximately corresponds with Bakhtin’s second sense of dialogue.

¹² *DN*, 324.

It was double-voiced discourse that remained a predominant interest of Bakhtin, and forms the fundamental basis for consideration of characterisation by an author according to Bakhtinian categories. Such discourse can be described as double-voiced since

*both author and character [are] speaking at the same time, ... [in] a single linguistic construction within which the accents of two differently oriented voices are maintained.*¹³

Just as different generations have their own way of speaking, so too do different classes, regions, ethnic groups and countless other possible variations. Heteroglossia can involve different ‘social languages’ within a single *national* language; different national languages within the same culture is described by the related term ‘polyglossia’.¹⁴ In Mark’s Gospel, both types can be found. The speech of the Galilean (remarked upon in the courtyard of the high priest) is indicative of the former (Mark 14:70). The frequent translation of Aramaic terms into Greek is indicative of the latter.¹⁵ Heteroglossia is not a cacophony of voices, but an integrated plurality of voices, reflective of different sets of values, experiences and conceptualisations. It signals the stratification (and interanimation) of such forms of language as genres, dialects, sociolects, and registers,¹⁶ that become dialogised by interindividual characters, as each responds to the language of the other:

Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralisation and decentralisation, of unification and disunification, intersect... Every utterance participates in the ‘unitary language’ (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces).¹⁷

¹³ *MPL*, 144. Elsewhere, Bakhtin (*DN*, 262–3) notes that “[a]uthorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia [*raznorecie*] can enter...; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized).”

¹⁴ *DN*, 263.

¹⁵ For example, the characteristic ὁ ἔστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον of Mark 5:41 and 15:34, or simply ὁ ἔστιν as in Mark 7:34.

¹⁶ ‘Sociolects’ relates to discourse determined by different social groups according to age, gender, economic position, and kinship. This contrasts with ‘registers’—discourse belonging to lawyers, doctors, businessmen, and politicians. Bakhtin (*DN*, 288–290) describes this (generic) stratification of language.

¹⁷ *DN*, 272.

The hearing-reader is invited to respond to these voices, as it is within heteroglossia that various speech genres may be found: forms of expression common (or at least known) to specific groups that may be hearing or reading the text. The response of the hearing-reader forms another dimension to the dialogue, since the hearing-reader will respond both to the direct intention of the character, and the refracted intention of the implied author.¹⁸

Heteroglossia, therefore, becomes a mechanism for authorial intentions to be refracted through the voices of specific interindividual characters—their dialogue and inner speech. This constitutes double-voiced discourse, in which two different intentions are expressed simultaneously: that of the speaking character, and the refracted intention of the implied author.¹⁹

The language used by characters in the novel, how they speak, is verbally and semantically autonomous; each character's speech possesses its own belief system, since each is the speech of another in another's language; thus it may also refract authorial intentions and consequently may to a certain degree constitute a second language for the author. Moreover, the character speech almost always influences authorial speech (and sometimes powerfully so), sprinkling it with another's words (that is, the speech of a character perceived as the concealed speech of another) and in this way introducing into it stratification and speech diversity.²⁰

¹⁸ *DN*, 282: [T]he listener is an orientation towards a specific conceptual horizon, toward the specific world of the listener; it introduces totally new elements into his discourse; it is in this way, after all, that various different points of view, conceptual horizons, systems for providing expressive accents, various social 'languages' come to interact with one another. The speaker strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual system of the understanding receiver; he enters into dialogical relationships with certain aspects of this system. The speaker breaks through the alien conceptual horizon of the listener, constructs his own utterance on alien territory, against... the listener's apperceptive background. (See also *PSG*, 68.)

¹⁹ Bakhtin describes the difference between 'single-voiced words' (such as direct, unmediated discourse, and objectified discourse) that may be dialogic in the first sense but not in the second sense; and 'double-voiced words' (in a passive manner, such as stylisation and parody, or actively, as active double-voiced words) which are dialogic in the second sense. Bakhtin's primary interest, so far as dialogue in the second sense is concerned, is in 'active double-voiced words'; such dialogue provides the most complex (internal) dialogization. The extent to which the author remains in control, and uses interindividual character discourse for the author's own purposes, determines whether it is a passive double-voiced discourse; or if it is active double-voiced discourse and thus can even resist the authorial intention and purpose. (*PDP*, 199)

²⁰ *DN*, 315. This latter concept of character speech influencing authorial speech is a key determinant of whether a work can be said to be polyphonic, or whether it is primarily monologic in character. The related concept of polyphony refers to the

Although Bakhtin's primary emphasis is upon the novel, his definition of ways in which speech is 'stratified' has relevance here, since such voices remain in dialogue with the ideological world of the hearing-reader, and therefore characters remain permanently unfinalisable. Such unfinalisability prompts Wall to comment helpfully that a Bakhtinian approach to characterisation involves a consideration of the significance of the dialogical

voices of each character... rather than attempting to assign defined limits through a study of his physical appearance, personality traits, social origins, domicile and such. For Bakhtin, a novelistic character is an unclosed set of intonations, harmonics and overtones that we can assign to one more or less personalized figure of the text, a set of voices actualized in a different manner with each separate reading of the text.²¹

Bakhtin speaks of three forms of speech stratification: (1) hybridisations, (2) pure dialogues and (3) the dialogised interrelation of languages.²² Hybridisation is a frequent element present in Mark, in which two social languages are mixed within a single utterance or encounter, or between two linguistic consciousnesses separated from each other especially by time or social differentiation.²³ A significant example may exist in Mark 13, in which Jesus—an Aramaic-speaking Galilean—provides a prophetic utterance relating to a period separated (at least by internal chronology) by several decades, and that possibly relates to people of different ethnic background.²⁴ Indeed it could be claimed that most of Mark is essentially a form of hybridisation—a double-voiced discourse in which the original voice of Jesus as master is re-accented

manner by which independent but interconnected voices are co-present within a text, with each utterance being equal. In such a democratic text, no voice—not even that of the implied author—is privileged over another voice, and involves the 'freedom' of the character's voice from that of the narrator. It could be argued that, in this narrowest of senses, Dostoevsky's novels would be only the first truly polyphonic novel; and therefore the first truly dialogical text!

²¹ Wall, "Characters," 53.

²² *DN*, 358.

²³ *DN*, 359: What is more, an intentional and conscious hybrid is not a mixture of two *impersonal* language consciousnesses (the correlates of two languages) but rather a mixture of two *individualized* language consciousnesses (the correlates of two specific utterances, not merely two languages) and two individual language-intentions as well: the individual, representing authorial consciousness and will, on the one hand, and the individualized linguistic consciousness and will of the character represented, on the other.

²⁴ This, of course, depends on whether the primary audience is considered to be located in Rome or part of the Eastern Mediterranean basin.

by the implied author as disciple. Given the essentially pseudonymous character of Mark,²⁵ the implied author is probably a 'disciple of a disciple'²⁶—thus re-accenting a re-accenting of Jesus' actual speech! If a character repeats another character's statement, from a linguistic perspective it is a repetition; from a logical perspective, it is identical; but from a metalinguistic perspective, it is agreement. Agreement and disagreement are both dialogical.²⁷ Newsom comments that "Agreement, too, is dialogical, for agreement is an active process of testing, assimilating and reaccentuating an utterance."²⁸

Pure dialogues are perhaps Bakhtin's favourite example of dialogue. Two examples will be significant for consideration of dialogue within Mark: the word-with-a-sideward-glance, and the word-with-a-loop-hole. In the first of these two, the authorial discourse takes a 'sideward glance' at a possible hostile answer from the referential object. Therefore, it anticipates this answer by delivering "a polemical blow... at the other's discourse on the same theme."²⁹

In Mark, the pattern of intercalation of one pericope within another often affords the author with the opportunity for such a 'word-with-a-sideward-glance'. Various other examples of this type of discourse will be considered in due course, but a single instance from Mark 7:27–9 will suffice here. Jesus, engaging in a first-level dialogue with the Syro-Phoenician woman, makes the comment concerning the children's bread and the dogs, and then appears to capitulate to the woman after a mini Rabbinic dialogue! But a second-level dialogue is evident, however, in the word-with-a-sideward-glance from the author to the hearing-reader concerning the expectation of Jesus' mission to the Jews and Gentiles (7:27–28).

²⁵ The unreliability of the Papias' reference in Eusebius has been widely discussed. The ascription of the Gospel to Peter via Mark is unlikely. (See Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: a new translation with introduction and commentary*, New York: Doubleday, 2000, 23–24.)

²⁶ The traditional link with Peter, although unproven and unlikely, would be indicative of the author's dependence on another first-hand witness. Whether Mark's Gospel rests on traditions coming from an apostle or whether it is primarily a composition by the author, the *implied* author appears to have some connection with the apostolic witness.

²⁷ Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics*, 132. Metalinguistics is the name given by Bakhtin to a new discipline that involves reflection on the process of linguistics itself, to arrive at meaning constructs.

²⁸ Carol Newsom, "Bakhtin and dialogic truth," in *Journal of religion*, 76, 1996, 300.

²⁹ *PDP*, 195.

The word-with-a-loop-hole, by contrast, is spoken by the person who does not want to be defined by another, and leaves a loop-hole to maintain unfinalisability. Defining this type, Bakhtin comments that,

[a] loop-hole is the retention for oneself of the possibility of altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words... This potential other meaning, that is, the loop-hole left open, accompanies the word like a shadow. Judged by its meaning alone, the word with a loop-hole should be an ultimate word and does present itself as such, but in fact it is only the penultimate word and places after itself only a conditional, not a final, period.³⁰

One example of a word-with-a-loop-hole is the choice of 'Son of Man' as the Markan Jesus' self-designation. Jesus refuses all other designations, in favour of a title that has little referential background for Jews and no real meaning at all for Gentiles. When this 'loop-hole title' is juxtaposed against the recurrent theme of Jesus' identity, and the secrecy motif, it can be seen to be an important dialogical device for the Markan author. It leaves open and unfinalised the ultimate meaning of 'christology' in Mark's narrative.

Clearly, from the categories of hybridisation and pure dialogues, a 'character zone' is more than simply direct or 'actual' speech. The implied author engages in dialogue within the character zone—a dialogue that also engages the hearing-reader's active participation. In the case of a work such as Mark, written in another language from that spoken by the characters, and possibly for a primary audience more familiar with a third language,³¹ such dialogue becomes even more complex since it may, at one level, involve privileging one language over another. The dialogised interrelationship of languages becomes important when considering the diversity of languages used in Mark (Aramaisms and Latinisms translated or transliterated into Greek) and the implied interrelationships occasioned by different social 'languages.' But privileging of a common language by an implied author, refracting the implied author's intentions through the common view, is not

³⁰ *PDP*, 233.

³¹ The possibility has been advanced (for example, by Bas van Iersel, *Mark: a reader-response commentary*, JSNT Supp 164, Sheffield, 1998), that the primary audience was Roman; as indicated, *inter alia*, by the higher number of 'Latinisms' than in Matthew or Luke (wherein several terms in Greek are then translated in Latin equivalents). However, such Latinisms were widely used terms throughout the Empire, and therefore the primary audience does not have to be Roman based on this vocabulary.

dialogical in the Bakhtinian sense.³² Indeed, for true dialogisation, the implied author may engage in dialogue with the common view, so that this view may be rejected in favour of another less ‘privileged’ language. In turn, the hearing-reader is invited to dialogue with both the ‘common view’, and the authorial dialogue that privileges another language. (Such a dialogic interaction between the hearing-reader and the implied author can constitute the ‘resisting reader’ of reader-response criticism.) Thus, both author and hearing-reader are critically important in any utterance.

Each utterance also requires a third person, however, whom Bakhtin calls the ‘superaddressee.’ He claims that theoretically the number of participants in a dialogue can be almost unlimited, but the third person (or superaddressee) is especially important.

[I]n addition to [the] addressee...the author of the utterance, with a greater or lesser awareness, presupposes a higher *superaddressee* (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time (the loophole addressee). In various ages and with various understandings of the world, this superaddressee and [the superaddressee’s] ideally true responsive understanding assume various ideological expressions (God, absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human justice, the people, the court of history, science, and so forth)... This follows from the nature of the word, which always wants to be *heard*, always seeks responsive understanding, and does not stop at *immediate* understanding but presses on further and further (indefinitely).³³

It could be argued, on this basis, that one form of the superaddressee is biblical research itself, since various biblical scholars as hearing-readers throughout time function as second-party addressees, but the process of biblical research continues to uncover different levels of meaning within the text.³⁴

The extent to which the author engages with the speech of characters, and with the hearing-reader, determines in part whether the text could

³² Contra David H. Richter (*Narrative theory*, London: Longman, 1996, 176), who claims that a “‘common language’—usually the average norm of spoken and written language for a given social group—is taken by the author precisely as the *common view*, as the verbal approach to people and things normal for a given sphere of society, as the *going point of view* and the *going value*. To one degree or another, the author distances himself from this common language, he steps back and objectifies it, forcing his own intentions to refract and diffuse themselves through the medium of this common view.”

³³ *PT*, 126.

³⁴ The concept of the text as ‘interactive web-site’ has already been considered.

be considered dialogical. A problem presents itself: doesn't the omniscient narrator in Mark prevent the possibility of Mark being considered 'dialogical' according to Bakhtin's definition, since narrator and implied author can be considered to be identical in Mark? The extent, however, to which some measure of focalisation³⁵ occurs in Mark places limits on the omniscient narrator and thereby opens the possibility of dialogue. It will be argued that several passages reflect such focalisation (for example, Mark 6:14–29 predominantly reflecting Herod's point of view); so thus, while the omniscient narrator intrudes at various points (see especially the explanatory γῆρ clauses), there is still some measure of variable focalisation throughout Mark.

Bakhtin's tendency to be confusing presents itself again at this point: he is not systematic in his reference to author or narrator, often confusing the two. In reality, an author always writes at a remove from the text, through the device of another voice—that of the narrator. This can only be done dialogically, by Bakhtin's own definition, and therefore all texts could be considered to be dialogic, since dialogism is a condition of textual language! However, the degree to which the implied author wants the hearing-reader to hear an utterance 'with quotation marks' determines the extent to which the text is dialogic in Bakhtin's second sense.³⁶ While the Markan narratorial/authorial stance would therefore normally demand that much of the discourse within the Gospel is, by nature, authoritative, and therefore excluded by definition from being polyphonic, the Gospel can be considered 'dialogic' at both first *and* second levels if there is evidence of a dialogic interplay between reported speech of interindividual character(s) and the reporting or 'authorial' context. To determine this, it is necessary to examine the authorial context, which

in effect, frames the reported speech—the latter is embedded in the former. What is of generic interest in such cases is the interplay between the two. Does the framing authorial context support, reject, or parody what it purports to relate by intonation or other (gestural) means at its disposal?³⁷

³⁵ Focalisation refers to the narratorial perspective from which a story is told. Sometimes a narrative may have no focalisation; at other times it may be focalised through a character. See also Gerard Genette, *Narrative discourse, an essay in method*, (trans.) J. Levin, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

³⁶ *PDP*, 185–187. See also *DN*, 338–341.

³⁷ David K. Danow, *The thought of Mikhail Bakhtin: from word to culture*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1991, 98.

Such Markan techniques as intercalation,³⁸ and proleptic and analeptic markers³⁹ provide an indication that the authorial context dialogues with reported speech to give the hearing-reader a different perspective on the individual pericope from that which is immediately apparent within a character-zone. For example, in Mark 6, the disciples are sent out in mission, and return to report. But the intercalated narrative of the beheading of the Baptizer, provides the hearing-reader with an authorial context that conveys levels of meaning that are not immediately apparent within the reported speech of the characters. The Markan use of anacoluthon (such as at 7:19), however, functions as an effective communication device in a predominantly oral approach and has a direct impact on the hearing-reader for whom it is provided.⁴⁰

If there is a process of development from an oral gospel to a fully literary one, was there a process of dialogue among various ‘voices’ influencing the literary process? Or if it is predominantly oral in its origin and development, at what point is there a dialogue between various speech genres? Wherever there is the possibility of a diversity of voices occurring within the text, between the text and the hearing-reader (both the original hearing-reader and subsequent hearing-readers), and indeed among texts, there is a dialogue taking place between and among those voices. Bakhtin speaks of such dialogue as it relates to heteroglossia, noting the

internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, generic languages... [and that] the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia... can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships.⁴¹

Bakhtin’s heteroglossia also provides an alternative to the artificial distinction that is sometimes drawn between orality and writtenness,

³⁸ For example, the intercalation of Mark 5:25–34 into the narrative of Mark 5:21–24, 35–43; the intercalation of Mark 11:15–19 into Mark 11:12–14, 20–25.

³⁹ For example prolepses related to the many predictions by Jesus; analepses concerning those who remember—Mark 11:21; 14:72.

⁴⁰ R.M. Fowler (*Let the reader understand: reader-response criticism and the Gospel of Mark*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, 113) comments: “The spoken word readily forgives and perhaps even favors anacoluthon. If Mark’s Gospel is deeply implicated in orality, we...ought to *hear* the awkward spots in Mark’s grammar as instances of a speaker pausing for commentary rather than *seeing* the awkward spots in the Gospel as blemishes in a printed text.”

⁴¹ *DN*, 263.

despite the recognition of transitional forms. Questions have been raised concerning the extent to which Mark's colloquial Koine is indicative of an essentially oral approach—even if, with Kelber, it was in opposition to a claimed superiority of orality;⁴² and concerning the syntax and style of Mark indicating closer comparison with popular literature (*Kleinliteratur*) arising out of predominantly oral forms.⁴³ While the possibility of other generic contacts (including *Hochliteratur*) cannot be overlooked,⁴⁴ the extent of their influence is likely to be rather circumscribed. Instead, popular (even vulgar?) literature for the 'vulgar' classes seems to be a more fruitful avenue for exploration of generic contacts.

Third-level dialogue

This, in turn, leads us to consideration of a third level of dialogue⁴⁵ which may occur with inter-textual or co-textual references,⁴⁶ and

⁴² Werner Kelber, *The oral and the written Gospel: the hermeneutics of speaking and writing in the synoptic tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

⁴³ The nineteenth-century distinction between *Hochliteratur* and *Kleinliteratur* has been shown to "have value only as ideal types at opposite ends of a complex spectrum of linguistic and literary styles and levels." D.E. Aune, *The New Testament in its literary environment*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987, 12. *Hochliteratur* could be defined as 'cultivated literature' produced for the educated upper classes in the Graeco-Roman world; *Kleinliteratur* could be defined as 'popular literature' for the lower classes. Much of the Greek New Testament is best seen in this latter category, due to its generally unpretentious Greek style.

⁴⁴ Reference will be made in subsequent chapters below to possible generic contacts from *Hochliteratur* that various scholars have proposed (such as MacDonald, *Homeric epics*).

⁴⁵ This third level of dialogue does not equate with Bakhtin's third sense of dialogue (see Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics*, 130–131, and throughout chapter 1), which relates more to the intersection of linguistics and metaphysics, and involves the concept that every 'person' is unfinalisable, and is constantly in a process of unfinalisable dialogue. Each psyche or cultural entity is liminal—always at a boundary. While the concept of 'boundary' is an important one which will be taken up within first-level dialogue, and unfinalizability will be considered within second-level dialogue, there needs to be a clear distinction between Bakhtin's third sense of dialogue, and my schema involving third-level dialogue. However, as Vines notes (*Markan Genre*, 35) "[t]he text is both externally dialogic in relation to its reader and may be, to one degree or another, internally dialogic in the context of its characters and story-world. These dialogic relations tend to coalesce around specific social and historical circumstances into semi-stable conventional forms...[that] we normally refer to as genres." It is this latter coalescence of dialogic relations that is being considered here under the concept of third-level dialogue.

⁴⁶ Joel B. Green (ed.), *Hearing the New Testament: strategies for interpretation*, Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1995, 183. For Green, *co-text* refers to the linguistic relationships within the text, for example of a pericope to the larger Markan narrative; whereas

requires careful examination since characterisation can be more readily understood in light of the extent to which the author shares patterns of characterisation with examples of various genres. It should be noted that, for Bakhtin, there cannot

be any dialogical relationships among texts when approached in a strictly linguistic way. Any purely linguistic juxtaposition and grouping of given texts must necessarily abstract itself from any dialogic relationships that might be possible among them as whole utterances.⁴⁷

Dialogical relationships among texts must be determined by ‘hearing’ similar voices within such texts. Inter-textual or co-textual references may therefore be allusions by the author inviting the hearing-reader to anticipate or draw inferences about characters. The hearing-reader will note the dialogical relationships among various texts, and where there are similar voicings, will draw from those other texts to assist in the construction of character in the text at hand. Such dialogical relationships may exist even without the direct knowledge of the author; thus the construction of character by the hearing-reader is not under the complete control of the author. Whether such references are the conscious intent of the author or otherwise, there may be various devices employed by the author that provide the hearing-reader with such inferential and referential background. The Markan devices of intercalation of pericopae, the analeptic use of *πάντα*, and even the use of *εὐθύς*, are examples of such co-textual referents.

Third-level dialogue considers the interactions among speech genres and their secondary derivatives—literary genres. However, the results of genre analysis have typically been inconclusive in relation to the Gospels as a ‘genre’.⁴⁸ Some approaches would see gospel as being a distinctively new genre with no direct parallels;⁴⁹ others find points of comparison with Old Testament generic forms;⁵⁰ still others draw comparisons with

inter-text refers to linguistic echoes in other texts, such as in other Scripture or ancient Graeco-Roman literature.

⁴⁷ *PDP*, 182.

⁴⁸ MacDonald (*Homeric epics*, 3), considers Markan genre “the elusive Holy Grail of gospel studies.”

⁴⁹ For example, J.G. Herder, “Regel der Zusammenstimmung unserer Evangelien aus ihrer Entstehung und Ordnung, 1797” in Detlev Dormeyer, *The New Testament among the writings of antiquity*, tr. Rosemarie Kossov, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, 20.

⁵⁰ For example, Dale and Patricia Miller, *The gospel of Mark as midrash on earlier Jewish and New Testament literature*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990; to a lesser

Hellenistic literature.⁵¹ Surveys of the history of the problem of Markan genre include those by David Aune, Richard Burridge, Vernon Robbins, and more recently by Michael Vines.⁵² Some of the problems revolve around the desire to discover ‘mimetic’ comparisons with other genres, especially on the basis of morphological, syntactical or structural consideration.⁵³ The fundamental difficulty with such mimetic approaches relates to the unlikelihood that a single generic paradigm influenced the Markan author in the production of the Gospel.

Bakhtin’s categories help to avoid the purely ‘mimetic’ comparison, providing instead for a process of dialogue with other generic contacts. Although writing from a different perspective, Auerbach had already noted the problems of such ‘mimetic’ comparison.⁵⁴ Vines notes the justifiable dissatisfaction that several scholars have shown with the process, and concludes that “the task of describing Mark’s genre has less to do with schematic classification than it does with investigating Mark’s literary heritage.”⁵⁵ Generic comparison with other texts on the basis

extent, Robbins, (*Jesus the teacher*) argues for a coalescence of Jewish and Graeco-Roman elements in Mark. More recently, Vines (*Markan Genre*, 2002) argues for a close comparison between Mark and Jewish novelistic literature of the Hellenistic period.

⁵¹ For example, Johannes Weiss, Paul Wendland, and others (see Dormeyer’s discussion, in *Antiquity*, 22–27); more recently, Charles Talbert, *What is a gospel? The genre of the canonical Gospels*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977; Gilbert Bilezikian *The liberated gospel: a comparison of the Gospel of Mark and Greek tragedy*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977; Mary-Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*; Whitney Taylor Shiner, *Follow me*; MacDonald, *Homeric epics*.

⁵² Aune (*New Testament*, 22–45), examines the wider question of genre criticism in relation to the gospels; Richard Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A comparison with Greco-Roman biography*, SNTS 70, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; V.K. Robbins, *New boundaries in old territory-form and social rhetoric, in Mark*, Emory Studies in early Christianity Vol. 3, New York: Peter Lang, 1994, 93–117; Vines, *Markan genre*, gives a comprehensive survey of the issue.

⁵³ Vines, (*Markan genre*, 2002, 3) comments that “the more prominent genres proposed are aretology, encomium, memorabilia, Socratic dialogue, Greek tragedy and . . . Homeric epic. Few of these proposals have gained broad support among Markan scholars. The genre that generally elicits the most attention is Greco-Roman biography.” Vines lists key contributors for each of these, and then develops cogent arguments concerning why the widely held theory of biography has not resolved the debate.

⁵⁴ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 45–46. Auerbach’s approach considers style as mimesis, focussing on word-choices and sentence-structuring, whereas Bakhtin “is concerned with genre as poesis, with higher-level structures of character, plot and setting as they shape social and psychological perception within language.” (Reed, *Dialogues*, 78.)

⁵⁵ Vines (*Markan genre*, 23) refers positively to the work of Eric Auerbach, Norman Petersen, Mary-Anne Tolbert, and Adela Yarbro Collins, while suggesting the limitations of each approach.

of morphological or syntactic considerations alone, however, would have been anathema to Bakhtin, who, throughout his life, engaged in a love-hate relationship with 'Formalists.'⁵⁶ Thus, while morphosyntactic comparisons may be helpful, Bakhtin maintains the importance of hearing the voices within the text; and this goes significantly beyond the limits of such comparisons.⁵⁷ Third-level dialogue is therefore an attempt to go beyond morpho-syntactic elements, although such comparisons may also yield fruitful future research.

For Bakhtin, genres are neither literary templates nor protocols for producing works with a combination of themes, literary devices or linguistic elements organised in a thematic unity or finalised structure. The study of genres is essentially a "diachronic study of how forms enter into combinations with other forms."⁵⁸ Medvedev, part of the 'Bakhtin circle', considers genre a way of seeing a given aspect of reality.⁵⁹ Essentially, it presents a programmatic (rather than analytical) understanding of genre, in which genre

is a complex system of means and methods for the conscious control and finalization of reality ... Human consciousness possesses a series of inner genres for seeing and conceptualizing reality.⁶⁰

Bakhtin himself writes much more extensively about specific applications of the Bakhtinian understanding of genre, although he never develops a systematic theory of genre⁶¹—at most, he only developed preliminary

⁵⁶ For example, see the critique of Formal Method in both *FM* and *FMSS*. The Formal Method is likened to 'scholarly Salierism' which "when taken to extremes, when made into an absolute, results in the killing of Mozart." (*FMSS*, 62.)

⁵⁷ *DLDP*, 21: Where linguistic analysis sees only words and interactions between their abstract elements (phonetic, morphological, syntactical and so on), artistic perception and concrete sociological analysis reveal the relations between *people* which are merely reflected and fixed in the verbal material. Discourse is a skeleton which is fleshed out only in the process of creative perception, consequently, only in the process of real social interaction.

⁵⁸ C. Thompson, "Bakhtin's 'theory' of genre" in *Studies in twentieth century literature*, 9:1, 1984, 34.

⁵⁹ *FM*, 134. Medvedev's *The formal method and literary scholarship* presents the most sustained discussion of the study of genre from within the earlier writings of the Bakhtin circle.

⁶⁰ *FM*, 133–134.

⁶¹ The connection with speech-utterances is a key issue for a Bakhtinian understanding of 'genre', as previously discussed. "It is in the course of a particular speech interaction, itself generated by a particular kind of social communication that this utterance, as a unit of speech communication, as a meaningful *entity*, is assembled and acquires a stable form. Each type of communication ... organizes the utterance *in its own way*, structures

notes for such a work. These later writings bear only Bakhtin's name, and range through his discussions in the "Epic and Novel," "Form and Chronotope," and "Discourse in the Novel" essays, and through *Problems in Dostoevsky's poetics*—especially the 1963 revision—and *Speech genres and other late essays*. Yet throughout, the Bakhtin circle's theory of discourse situates their notion of genre in opposition to traditional concepts of literary genre.⁶² Bakhtin comments that

[g]enres...throughout the centuries of their life accumulate forms of seeing and interpreting particular aspects of the world...[T]he genre serves as an external template, but the great artist awakens the semantic possibilities that lie within it.⁶³

The extent to which Mark created a new genre—the Gospel—is dependent on the perceived greatness of the Gospel writer's artistry in using the external generic templates available and developing their inherent potential.⁶⁴ Yet such inherent potential is not simply the sum of the parts; rather there are ideological potentialities that are at least as significant in their development. Otherwise, it could be claimed that Mark's creation of a new genre would effectively replace existing genres upon which it was modelled. Bakhtin maintains, however, that

[a] newly born genre never supplants or replaces any already existing genres. Each new genre merely supplements the old ones, merely widens the circle of already existing genres. For every genre has its own predominant sphere of existence, in which it is irreplaceable...But at the same time each fundamentally and significantly new genre, once it arrives, exerts influence on the entire circle of old genres: the new genre makes

it *in its own way*, and completes its grammatical and stylistic form, its *type-structure*, which we shall from now on call *genre*." (*LS*, 116).

⁶² For example, Bakhtin's approach to genre differs markedly from Russian formalists such as Tynyanov and Tomashevsky. Clive Thompson, noting this difference, comments that "[w]hereas the Russian Formalists tended to discuss genre in terms of abstract typology, closure and narrative perspective, Bakhtin emphasizes ideology, differentiation and polyphony (or multi-voicedness)." (Thompson in *Studies*, 31.)

⁶³ *RQNM*, 5.

⁶⁴ Canonical processes tended to close off the development or evolution of the Gospel genre. The canonisation of the four Gospels of the early church, and the consequent process of rendering apocryphal all later 'sayings'-type gospels (whether from orthodox or heretical churches) resulted in gospel—as a genre—being restricted to the first and early second centuries and remaining a narrative composite of various generic forms, (as Dormeyer notes, *Antiquity*, 214–215) and this variety can be traced among the gospels (as well as within them), with different (canonical) gospels potentially reflecting different generic backgrounds. For example, the inclusion of birth narratives in Matthew and Luke align those gospels more closely with the biographical genre.

the old ones, so to speak, more conscious; it forces them to perceive their own possibilities and boundaries...⁶⁵

For Bakhtin, then, genres are forms of thinking and conceptualising reality, and do not simply imitate their antecedents. Herein lies a significant contribution to the deliberations concerning Markan genre, since seeking to discover the points of imitation of antecedents is what has tended to result in frustration concerning the actual nature of the Gospel's genre. The conceptualisation of reality involved with genres is what Bakhtin refers to as architectonic form,⁶⁶ and shapes the successful creation of any work. The author will use those aspects of reality that are the potentiality of that genre to express a new reality, since the author "must learn to see reality with the eyes of the genre."⁶⁷

Emerson and Holquist note that

the better we know possible variants of the genres that are appropriate to a given situation, the more choice we have among them. Up to a point we may play with speech genres, but we cannot avoid being generic. There is no pure spontaneity, for breaking frames depends on the existence of frames.⁶⁸

Bakhtin's approach to genre extends to the range of language use, including everyday speech. He distinguishes between primary genres (the diverse modes of oral communication, determined by social situations), and secondary genres (predominantly written forms such as novels, drama and poetry). Yet primary and secondary genres are different ends of a continuous spectrum of language use. By contrast with most literary approaches, Bakhtin gave substantial attention to these primary, or 'speech genres', considering them to be "relatively stable thematic, compositional and stylistic types of utterances [for everyday use]."⁶⁹ Bakhtin's overarching category of dialogism assumes that it is from these speech genres—the rules that govern speech activity in everyday

⁶⁵ *PDP*, 271.

⁶⁶ Architectonic form, which Bakhtin defines as "the expression of the axiologically determinate creative activity of an aesthetically active *subiectum*," is the subject of extensive treatment in *AAEP*.

⁶⁷ *FM*, 134.

⁶⁸ Emerson and Holquist, in Bakhtin, *PSG*, xix.

⁶⁹ *PSG*, 64.

conversation—that the basis of genre formation is found; with literary genres being essentially a complex type of speech genre.⁷⁰

Bakhtin identifies three intertwined factors in an utterance: “1. semantic exhaustiveness of the theme; 2. the speaker’s plan or speech will; 3. typical compositional and generic forms of finalization.”⁷¹ Usually, simple themes are dependent on their context, and respond to standardised treatments (such as military commands, factual questions and responses). However, semantic exhaustiveness of the theme may also be relative, with degrees of finalisation determined primarily by the aims of the author—“within the boundaries of a specific authorial intent.”⁷² This prompts Bakhtin’s discussion of the speaker’s speech plan or will where themes are less dependent on context. The choice of subject, and what the speaker intended to accomplish with such an utterance at such a time, becomes more significant. Hearing-readers must therefore

[orientate] themselves with respect to the situation and the preceding utterances, easily and quickly grasp the speaker’s speech plan...[and] sense the developing whole of the utterance.⁷³

Bakhtin considers the generic forms of the utterance to be of greatest importance. For “when the speaker’s speech plan...is applied and adapted to a chosen genre, it is shaped and developed within a certain generic form.”⁷⁴ Yet such generic forms create a restraint on the structure of the utterance, and thus, “the single utterance, with all its individuality and creativity, can in no way be regarded as a completely free combination of forms of language,”⁷⁵ since it will tend to follow a habitual form of expression. These habitual forms of expression shape genre by a process of accretion rather than design or integration. A

⁷⁰ Bakhtin maintains that primary genres are altered and assume a special character when they enter into complex ones (*PSG*, 62).

⁷¹ *PSG*, 77. There are also three factors associated with the non-verbal context of the utterance: “a *spatial purview* common to the speakers..., *common knowledge and understanding of the circumstances*, and...*common evaluation* of these circumstances.” (*DLP*, 11).

⁷² *PSG*, 77.

⁷³ *PSG*, 77–78.

⁷⁴ *PSG*, 78.

⁷⁵ *PSG*, 81. This understanding contrasts with that of Saussure (and others after him) for whom the utterance is an individual act. Bakhtin criticizes Saussure for ignoring the impact of forms of combinations of language (i.e. speech genres). His most extensive consideration of Saussure’s teachings are in *MPL*, a work attributed to Vološinov but reflecting Bakhtin’s own thought.

complex interaction of genres occurs, as genres adapt for new purposes from forms that previously served other purposes. These views on genre formation, together with his concept of unfinalisability, caused him in 1963 to revise his 1929 edition of the Dostoevsky book to include the idea that Bakhtin calls 'genre memory'.⁷⁶ Genre-memory indicates the manner in which an author, by using such devices, may be participating in a genre which itself 'remembers' generic patterns. Such innovative usages create new potentials within the genre; genre-memory represents the tendency of genres to change with each usage, and 'remember' such usage. Thus, an author may be influenced by a particular genre, and that genre will in turn impose on the new text various generic elements of which the author may not be directly aware.⁷⁷ While a genre may provide the 'map' for a speech or literary work, the work itself uses the genre in response to a specific situation, and thus the genre itself is changed by each usage.

Bakhtin, Genre-Memory & Mark

Bakhtin's concept of genre-memory provides an alternative that creates a new framework for understanding in relation to Markan genre studies, for while such an anthropomorphic coinage as 'genre-memory' may appear quaint, it has also been considered by some scholars to be the solution to the opposition between synchronic and diachronic poetics.⁷⁸ Thus, Bakhtinian genre discussions stress the dialogic interaction between various utterances, while also engaging in dialogue with the social and cognitive 'processes' of the hearing-reader. Each new

⁷⁶ Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics*, 89. The term 'genre-memory' was a coinage of Morson and Emerson, in response to Bakhtin's description of the process. Essentially, it is Bakhtin's term. Northrop Frye (*Anatomy of criticism: four essays* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, 247), from a different perspective, also sounds a cautionary note for genre-critics that "criticism by genres is not so much to classify as to clarify such traditions and affinities, thereby bringing out a large number of literary relationships."

⁷⁷ As Bakhtin explains: "Trying to understand and explain a work solely in terms of the conditions of its epoch alone, solely in terms of the conditions of the most immediate time, will never enable us to penetrate into its semantic depths." (*RQNM*, 4.)

⁷⁸ See, for example, V.V. Ivanov, "The significance of M.M. Bakhtin's ideas on sign, utterance and dialogue for modern semiotics," *Semiotics and structuralism: readings from the Soviet Union*, ed. Henryk Baran, New York: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1974, 186-243; and Clive Thompson, "Bakhtin's 'theory' of Genre," in *Studies in twentieth century literature*, 9:1, 1984, 35.

example of a generic type is therefore a new text-event: rather than merely serving synchronically in relation to an abstract generic typology, the text-event also operates diachronically through transformation of the genre it ‘remembers’.

A genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously. Genre is reborn and renewed at every stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre. This constitutes the life of the genre... A genre lives in the present, but always remembers its past, its beginning. Genre is a representative of creative memory in the process of literary development.⁷⁹

Bakhtin therefore stands in opposition to some of his contemporaries and other genre critics who claim that their typologies are abstract absolutes.⁸⁰ His approach tends to be minimalist and ambiguous, and even his preferred concept of the chronotope can relate more to motifs than to generic conventions.⁸¹

In relation to Mark, scholars have long questioned what influences impacted upon the development of the Gospel as a genre, whereas Bakhtin argues that a writer can develop the potentials of traditions they barely know. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*, as the central argument of an entire chapter on “Characteristics of a genre”, Bakhtin contends that generic contacts, rather than influences, comprise the critical issue in genre development.⁸² For example, it may have been the objective memory of the genre(s) with which the Markan author was working, rather than his subjective memory of specific types of writing, that preserved the unique set of features apparent in the Gospel. Part of this ‘objective memory’ includes the original context of the genres and even specific linguistic features such as style and vocabulary—for example Markan parataxis, and the use of εὐθύς, as frequent features in the Graeco-Roman romances.⁸³ Thus, the organic logic of a genre or genres can be understood and assimilated even if the generic contact is based on fragmentary examples of generic models.

⁷⁹ *PDP*, 106.

⁸⁰ See especially Boris Tomashevsky, “Literary genres,” in *Russian poetics in translation*, 5, 1978, 52–93; Jurij Tynyanov, “Dostoevsky and Gogol,” in *Dostoevsky and Gogol: texts and criticism*, ed. P. Meyer & S. Rudy, Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1977, 102–117.

⁸¹ For example, his ‘road’ chronotope seems to reflect more a motif within adventure novels than an entirely separate generic construct.

⁸² *PDP*, 157.

⁸³ These features will be discussed further in subsequent chapters below.

Bakhtin's own assessment of the generic background to the Gospels is interesting. He maintains that,

[t]he basic narrative genres of ancient Christian literature—'Gospels' ... are linked with an ancient aretalogy which in the first centuries AD developed within the orbit of the menippea.⁸⁴

Flavius Philostratus' work *Vita Apollonii* would therefore seem to be worth considering at this point as an example of aretalogical writing, even though its dating is generally considered to be significantly later.⁸⁵ Thus, it could be considered in terms of its intertextual referencing; however, its late date excludes it from being an element in the Markan genre-memory. Its purpose for comparison would be as a paradigm of aretalogy which would have literary and philological dependence on earlier (missing?) texts; thus the precursors of this work *may* have been part of the Markan genre-memory. In any case, Bakhtin's opinion concerning the genre of Gospel was offered some time before significant questions were raised concerning whether Gospels represent a θεῖος ἄνθρωπος type of narrative,⁸⁶ and therefore his assessment is inaccurate. More helpful is his acknowledgment that gospel absorbed other genres such as the symposium,⁸⁷ although his emphasis on menippean satire was almost a

⁸⁴ *PDP*, 135.

⁸⁵ It is almost certain that it could not have been published before 217 CE, although it refers to an earlier age. *Vita Apollonii* includes a miraculous birth of the hero, attribution of healing miracles to the hero, the hero's reputation for holiness, his bodily ascension to heaven, and several resurrection appearances to those who doubted the possibility of a future life.

⁸⁶ The concept of θεῖος ἄνθρωπος (as a term for a charismatic miracle-worker endowed with supernatural power) is one that Eugene M. Boring ("The kingdom of God in Mark," in Wendell Willis (ed.), *The kingdom of God in 20th-Century interpretation*, Peabody Ma: Hendrickson, 1987, 143) claims has a positive dimension in Markan Christology. Others, including Weeden (*Mark*), Paul Achtemeier, ("Toward the isolation of pre-Markan miracle catenae," *JBL* 89, 1970, 265–91), Leander Keck, ("Mark 3:7–12 and Mark's Christology," *JBL* 84, 1965, 341–58), and Norman Perrin (*A modern pilgrimage in New Testament christology*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), see this notion as the primary source of controversy between Jesus and his disciples: their christological expectations of him as θεῖος ἄνθρωπος conflicted with Jesus' own self-understanding as suffering Messiah. However, scholars such as Carl R. Holladay, (*Theios aner in Hellenistic Judaism: a critique of the use of this category in New Testament christology*, Missoula, Mont: Scholars Press, 1977), Barry Blackburn, (*Theios aner and the Markan miracle traditions: a critique of the theios aner concept as an interpretative background of the miracle traditions used by Mark*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), and David Tiede, (*The charismatic figure as miracle worker*, SBL Dissertation Series 1, Missoula, Mont: Scholars Press, 1972) have successfully argued that the θεῖος ἄνθρωπος is a suspect concept, and the most that can be said is that Jesus' divine identity is a significant theme in the Gospel, with people having difficulty in comprehending it.

⁸⁷ *PDP*, 135.

fixation. He saw it as a key component in the development of the novel, noting its Protean capacity to absorb other generic contacts, creating a radically new genre. Menippea derives from carnivalised folklore, and possesses several key characteristics—such as scandals, the use of the fantastic, and the provocation of theoretical ideas in extraordinary settings—outlined succinctly by Vice.⁸⁸

The incidence of angels in Mark 1:13, and on other occasions in Jesus' teaching (Mark 8:38; 12:25; 13:27,32); fantastic events (Mark 9:2–8); the three-tiered universe of the Gospel; the ultimate oxymoronic reversal of a God who has become human; these are just some of the ways in which Mark holds certain characteristics that bear comparison with menippea. Vines notes that

the characteristic irony of menippea is that those who have nothing, those who know they are fools and embrace their powerlessness, are the ones better prepared for death. This irony...[becomes] apparent in the Menippean romances.⁸⁹

It also is an underlying irony throughout Mark. Indeed, much of what could be considered to be carnivalesque influences in literature (and not least in Mark) could be traced to the menippea.

Yet it would seem appropriate to separate carnival influences from discussion of chronotopes: while a chronotope of menippea can be identified, it is also important to realise that carnival influence—which is admittedly associated with menippea although not restricted to it—tends to cross-penetrate all chronotopes and thereby 'degrades' them from being a pure generic form. Instead, carnival as a phenomenon causes

⁸⁸ Sue Vice's description includes such elements as a "comic genre";...its plot, characters, and setting benefit from a wide-ranging inventiveness, the presence of "historical and legendary figures", and the fantastic;...the use of the fantastic arises from the menippea's philosophical centre, "the creation of extraordinary situations for the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea";...different generic elements are organically combined;...a concern is shown for the "stripped down" versions of life's ultimate questions;... "three-planed construction": hell and heaven feature as well as earth;... "experimental fantasticality" involving "observation from some unusual point of view";...unusual states of mind (insanity, split personality, dreams) are represented, not as "mere themes" but with a "formal, generic significance";...carnavalesque "scandals and eccentricities" constitute a new artistic category;...oxymoronic linkages and abrupt transitions characterise the representation of persons;...utopian elements are often present;...inserted genres...appear, usually with a high degree of parody." (*Introducing Bakhtin*, Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1997, 128–129.)

⁸⁹ Vines, *Markan genre*, 113.

generic ‘mutation.’⁹⁰ Vines’ treatment of the chronotope of menippean satire, while carefully considered, is perhaps not entirely successful in considering such cross-penetration of carnival. He notes the tendency for menippea to absorb various speech genres and transform literary genres. Yet, while menippea is a literary expression of carnival, it does not exhaust the possibilities of carnival at an oral, enacted level. The capacity for carnivalesque penetration of all chronotopic possibilities within Mark is part of the reason for seeing carnival in this study as a separate ‘matrix’ for consideration of various passages in Mark.

While many points of comparison may be evident between the Gospel and the menippea, it is clearly not the only generic contact that has shaped Mark. The presence of Semitisms in Mark,⁹¹ together with similarities with Old Testament prophet-biographies (including the clear use of the Elijah tradition), shows the strong influence of Jewish generic contacts and has caused others to see Mark as essentially midrash on various Hebrew Scriptures,⁹² or that “comparison with the Jewish novel clarifies the literary heritage and illuminates the ideological interests of [Mark] ... better than a comparison with Greco-Roman literary types.”⁹³ Vines has outlined clearly the problems associated with comparison with Graeco-Roman parallels, yet he also acknowledges close chronotopic comparisons—especially with Graeco-Roman novels—that suggest a single generic comparison is not appropriate. His comparatively brief treatment of Jewish novels certainly raises interesting questions: the possibility of third-level dialogue with Jewish novels needs to be explored extensively, and promises to be a fruitful avenue for future study from a Bakhtinian perspective to develop further the understanding of potential

⁹⁰ Vines, *Markan Genre*, 108–119.

⁹¹ See especially Elliott C. Maloney, *Semitic interference in Marcan syntax*, SBL Dissertation series 51, Chico, Cal: Scholars Press, 1981; J.K. Elliott, *The language and style of the gospel of Mark*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993, chapter 12.

⁹² For example, Miller and Miller, *Mark as midrash*. Some of the conclusions drawn by Miller and Miller seem rather fanciful, (especially their view that the double use of εὐθύς in a pericope suggests that the Markan Jesus has been (successfully) tempted) yet their monograph provides some useful data and a helpful approach, if midrash can be considered to be part of the Markan genre-memory.

⁹³ Vines, *Markan genre*, 164. He argues compellingly for an apocalyptic chronotope more closely associated with Jewish novels than with Graeco-Roman parallels. In another context, Reed (*Dialogues*, 94–95) notes that Mark “gives ample dialogic expression to the extrabiblical discourse of apocalyptic, and it uses the discourses of biblical law, biblical prophecy, and biblical wisdom much more sparingly than the other Gospels. The enigmatic character of Mark is both cause and symptom of the way it holds the idioms of the Hebrew Bible at an ironic distance in its presentation of [gospel].”

generic contacts. Overall, however, Vines' treatment does not negate the impact of Graeco-Roman parallels as significant in relation to the development of the Gospel genre.⁹⁴ There would appear to be more than one chronotope evident in Mark, and each chronotope evident is in turn interpenetrated by carnival.

Mary-Ann Tolbert's inclination towards Graeco-Roman novels, rather than to the 'high-literature' of Attic prose or poetry, seems to be more fruitful in terms of linguistic and stylistic parallels:

[B]y exploring similar literature contemporary with Mark, we may begin to discover some of the conventions and patterns that might have been present in the generic repertoire of the authorial audience. Although the generic suggestions of aretalogy, biography, and memorabilia all clearly find resonances in the Gospel, none of them account for the simple, fairly crude, synthetic narrative Mark exhibits. However, locating Mark in the ranks of Hellenistic popular culture does appear to account for those qualities and at the same time helps clarify the Gospel's links to elite forms of aretalogy, biography, and memorabilia. Fortunately, one other example of Hellenistic popular literature survived the manuscript transmission process: the ancient erotic novel.⁹⁵

Tolbert's acknowledgment that other generic forms (such as aretalogy, biography, and memorabilia) find resonances in Mark, supports the contention that various generic contacts (rather than 'influences') are in evidence. Although dismissive of such other generic forms, she does make a valid case for parallels with Greek romance; it could be said that among generic contacts, some have more significance for shaping the Gospel than others.⁹⁶ But Tolbert's basic thesis has validity, especially if Bakhtin's constructs are applied: Gospel is not the same as novel, but

⁹⁴ Marcus takes issue with "scholars who regard [Mark]...as sophisticated practitioners of the Hellenistic rhetorical arts (e.g. Standaert,...Mack and Robbins...) we should never forget the dismay felt by the rhetorically trained Augustine when he first turned to the biblical writings after years of studying the classics" (*Mark*, 60).

⁹⁵ Tolbert, *Sowing*, 78. While Mark does not fit the form of ancient biography, a modified form of biography or aretalogy may lie behind Mark and form part of the 'genre-memory' of the Gospel; however it seems clear that several generic derivatives have become violated and renewed. Most likely this has been caused by the combined influences of 'popular' literature and the carnivalesque.

⁹⁶ Contra Marcus, (*Mark*, 65), who rejects Tolbert's comparison with romances (novels) because, while he acknowledges "certain novelistic features, [Mark] differs from ancient novels in having as its central character a real person of the recent past rather than fictional star-crossed lovers." Ronald F. Hock ("Why New Testament scholars should read ancient novels," in *Ancient fiction and early Christian narrative*, 125) notes perceptively concerning the applicability of romances to New Testament scholarship generally, that "the romances are virtually an unparalleled, if underused, source for a wide range of

Graeco-Roman romances may comprise significant generic contacts and profoundly influence the Markan genre-memory.⁹⁷ This is not to imply that the key elements of such romance-novels will be found in Mark; in fact, discussion of generic categorisation of ancient novels is itself anything but homogeneous, with even many narrative prose works being considered to be on the fringe of the genre. The Gospel clearly does not contain many of the key elements considered to be part of the plot of the five ‘idealistic novels,’ and cannot be considered to be part of this genre.⁹⁸ Bakhtin claims, however, that the Greek romance—as part of the ‘force of novelness’—absorbed many other genres.⁹⁹

Bakhtin, Chronotope & Mark

If genre-memory is an important determinant in shaping each new usage of a genre, Bakhtin’s other key contribution to discussions of genre is his claim that genre and generic distinctions are defined by chronotopes as a basic unit of literary analysis. “[I]t is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time.”¹⁰⁰ The chronotope could be considered, however, to be as much a theoretical perception

social and intellectual institutions that characterized life in the Graeco-Roman world during the New Testament period.”

⁹⁷ Medvedev and Bakhtin (*FM*, 27) comment that “in order to reveal and define the literary physiognomy of a given work, one must at the same time reveal its general ideological physiognomy; one does not exist without the other. And, in revealing the latter, we cannot help revealing its socio-economic nature as well.” Clearly the ideological and socio-economic nature of *Mark* is more likely to have points in common with the folk literature of ordinary people than the ‘high’ literature of the cultured, richer classes. As well as Tolbert’s preference for such a location of Mark, more recently Trainor (*Quest for home*) has located the audience for the gospel among the urban poor; while the evidence for an urban locale may be less apparent, his preference for locating the gospel among the ‘vulgar’ classes is certainly helpful.

⁹⁸ The plot elements usually involve: handsome hero and beautiful heroine fall in love and pledge eternal fidelity to each other; they appear fated to be separated and their happiness destroyed; a series of adventures ensues involving separations and brief reunions, enslavement and danger to their lives. Eventually they are reunited and enjoy marital bliss.

⁹⁹ *FTC*, 89. B.P. Reardon (*Collected ancient Greek novels*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989, 7) notes that by the time of the early church, there was a substantial core of love-romance, and around it a fringe of nonerotic forms. There was ample room for influences from a wide range of earlier literature: epic, tragedy, comedy, love poetry are the forms that most noticeably colour the novel.

¹⁰⁰ *FTC*, 84–85.

of reality as a literary construct.¹⁰¹ Bakhtin's conception of literature involves both dialogic interaction among texts, and the referential (and inferential) background of authors and hearing-readers: semantic elements that may be historically and textually divergent, are ordered within a framework of cognitive structures or orientations employed by authors and hearing-readers.

Every genre has its own orientation in life, with reference to its events, problems, etc. . . . The first orientation is in the direction of real space and real time . . . [and] presupposes a particular audience, this or that reaction, and one or another relationship between the audience and the author. The work occupies a certain place in everyday life and is joined to or brought nearer some ideological sphere.¹⁰²

Bakhtin called such orientations 'chronotopes'. The chronotope becomes the measure of the ways in which particular genres represent historical reality;¹⁰³ how the relationships of fictional time, space, and character are constructed; and the ways in which they relate the formal properties of plot, narrator, and intertextuality. Fundamentally, Bakhtin notes that in the chronotope

spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.¹⁰⁴

Bakhtin proceeds to enumerate particular examples of chronotopes as they occur in narrative forms, especially from ancient Greek and Latin

¹⁰¹ Bakhtin notes that any "point of view is chronotopic, that is, it includes both the spatial and temporal aspects" *I*z, 134.

¹⁰² *FM*, 131. B.E. Perry (*The ancient romances: a literary-historical account of their origins*, Sather Classical lectures, vol. 37, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) notes that genres are created by individuals responding to specific historical and social circumstances. In this, he is close to Bakhtin's own emphases.

¹⁰³ Michael Holquist (*Dialogism—Bakhtin and his world*, London: Routledge, 1990) perceptively notes the importance of the chronotope for historical poetics since "chronotope may . . . be used as a means for studying the relation *between* any text and its times, and thus as a fundamental tool for a broader social and historical analysis." Morson and Emerson (*Prosaics*, 48) consider that Bakhtin's concept of heterochrony "is a key element, often overlooked, in Bakhtin's own sense of history." This concept of heterochrony, together with that of chronotope, are elements of Bakhtin's thought that could benefit from further research as an alternative to the bifurcation between synchronic and diachronic approaches to Biblical studies.

¹⁰⁴ *FTC*, 84.

literature, in which field he originally trained.¹⁰⁵ These include the chronotope of adventure, the chronotope of everyday life, the chronotope of biographical time, the chronotope of the road, and the chronotope of the threshold. These will be briefly considered, and those that have special significance for Markan studies will be more extensively treated in the relevant chapters below.

Bakhtin notes that the time component of the Greek romance is 'adventure time'.¹⁰⁶ He refers to adventure time as being 'undifferentiated' because it does not have historical referents or contexts but

is composed of a series of short segments that correspond to separate adventures; within each such adventure, time is organized from without, technically. What is important is to be able to... meet or not to meet and so forth... These time-segments are introduced and intersect with specific link-words: 'suddenly' and 'at just that moment'.¹⁰⁷

Space is essentially interchangeable: one setting would serve just as well as another, but large settings are needed, especially for the adventure novel of ordeal. This chronotope has several examples relevant to Markan studies,¹⁰⁸ including Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* (*De Chaerea et Callirhoe*)¹⁰⁹ and Xenophon of Ephesus' *Ephesian Tale of Anthia and Habrocomes* (*Ephesiaca*).¹¹⁰ For the purposes of this study, both *Callirhoe*

¹⁰⁵ This occupies much of Bakhtin's essay *FTC*.

¹⁰⁶ Bakhtin treats this chronotope extensively (*FTC*, 86–110).

¹⁰⁷ *FTC*, 91–92.

¹⁰⁸ While *Ninus* may technically be the oldest novel, dating perhaps to 100 BCE, it is too fragmentary and short for comparative analysis.

¹⁰⁹ This text will be represented hereafter as *Callirhoe*, since she appears to be the predominant (or at least the strongest) character!

¹¹⁰ This text will be represented hereafter as *Ephesiaca*. The full texts of both *Callirhoe* and *Ephesiaca* are represented by single, erratic copies sharing a late date; although dated variously, it seems likely that *Callirhoe* was the first of the novels, dating from the first century, and therefore pre-dating or contemporaneous with Mark. Brigitte Egger (in J.R. Morgan and R. Stoneman, *Greek fiction: the Greek novel in context*, London: Routledge, 1994) claims it to be the first, although does not indicate a possible date. Consuelo Ruiz-Montero (in G. Schmeling, *The novel in the ancient world*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) considers *Callirhoe* to be from the late first century to early second century, with *Ephesiaca* slightly later. Niklas Holzberg (in Schmeling, *Novel*) dates *Callirhoe* in the mid first-century. B.P. Reardon (in Schmeling, *Novel*, 317) dates *Callirhoe* in or before Nero's reign. Bernhard Kytzler (in Schmeling, *Novel*, 348) maintains *Ephesiaca* probably dates from the second century, even though it shares many common elements with earlier writings. By contrast, David Konstan (in Morgan and Stoneman, *Greek fiction*, 49) considers *Ephesiaca* to be possibly the earliest of the surviving Greek novels. Tomas Hägg (*The novel in antiquity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, 15–20) notes that, on the basis of papyrus fragments, *Callirhoe* must be placed before 150 CE, and even as early as the first century BCE. Hägg also gives consideration to the volume of scholarly

and *Ephesiaca* will be considered as having early dates, with *Callirhoe* pre-dating *Mark*, and *Ephesiaca* either contemporaneous with *Mark* or written slightly thereafter. Both are examples from antiquity of ‘penny dreadful’ literature, which have much in common with folktales. The connections with the Markan εὐθύς are obvious; and the Markan usage of random and obscure temporal indicators is another similarity with such literature. The adventure chronotope will be considered more extensively in a later chapter, which considers this chronotope as a key structuring matrix for Mark 1–8.

Despite these similarities, however, Mark’s Gospel does not exactly fit into the same genre as the works of either Chariton or Xenophon of Ephesus. This is hardly surprising, as the long history of genre comparison has yet to reveal any single generic parallel that has proven definitive and conclusive. It is for this reason that the concepts of genre-memory and chronotope are particularly helpful. Bakhtin notes the capacity of Greek romance for incorporation into, and coalescence with, most genres of ancient literature, and Mark clearly reflects patterns found in other chronotopes, as well as the chronotope of adventure.

The chronotope of everyday life has only two extant examples from antiquity—*The Golden Ass* of Apuleius (*Apulei metamorphoseon*)¹¹¹ and *The Satyricon* of Petronius (*C. Petronii Satiricon Liber*),¹¹² although some of the characteristics of this chronotope appear in other genres such as satires and Hellenistic diatribes. It is possible that this chronotope may reflect Bakhtin’s ambiguity in that it appears to be more motivic than generic, because it could be that this chronotope may reflect a generic subtype of the adventure romance.¹¹³ While this chronotope does include chance events, unusual occurrences and discrete adventures, the element of chance has less impact on the central character than in earlier Greek romances. The hero shows some measure of initiative and change, being less static than in some other chronotopes,

writing concerning the relationship between *Ephesiaca* and *Callirhoe*, noting various attempts to prove—on the basis of common motifs and phraseological form—which was the model and which the imitator. He concludes, ultimately, that *Ephesiaca* cannot be dated with any certainty.

¹¹¹ Hereafter referred to as *Apulei metamorphoseon*.

¹¹² Hereafter referred to as *Petronii Satiricon*.

¹¹³ Bakhtin notes that there are “individual motifs that are included as constituent elements in...not only novels of various eras and types but also into literary works of other genres...By their very nature these motifs are chronotopic (although it is true the chronotope is developed in different ways in the various genres).” *FTC*, 97.

and carries some responsibility for the changes that occur in his life. However, such initiative tends to be negative, reflecting some area of moral weakness.¹¹⁴ Interestingly, this element of initiative and change is less typical of Graeco-Roman literature, in which the hero is essentially static. The influence of this chronotope on Mark would seem to be relatively minimal.¹¹⁵ It will be argued, however, that the Gospel also reflects a more dynamic understanding of character, as indicated in this chronotope, than in that of the chronotope of adventure. It could even be argued that the character of Jesus shows evidence of change (if not development), as for example in the discourse with the Syro-Phoenician woman.¹¹⁶ The question whether Jesus himself undergoes some change is one that needs further consideration.

The chronotope of biographical time is illustrated by two distinct types of Graeco-Roman biography, according to Bakhtin. 'Analytic' biography, as exemplified by Suetonius, describes the character at the outset by a set of rubrics. Episodes in the life of the character—usually widely separated in time and space—are then used to illustrate these rubrics. The character is essentially static, experiencing no change or development.¹¹⁷ In 'energetic' biography, as exemplified by Plutarch, the character is revealed through specific actions, but these are not merely to illustrate certain qualities. The essential 'energy' of the character is constituted through actions. Nevertheless, the character remains essentially changeless, and actual experiences become merely the focus for the disclosure of the character's energy.¹¹⁸ In ancient biography, the individual's self-consciousness is revealed and shaped in the public square. The character is "open on all sides, he is all surface; there is in him...nothing that could not be subject to public or state control and evaluation".¹¹⁹ Thus, in the ancient world, characters display only a minimal level of interiority, if any at all.

¹¹⁴ Holquist, *Dialogism*, 110.

¹¹⁵ Morson and Emerson, (*Prosaics*, 384) note that this chronotope has had an effect on Christian narratives of temptation and rebirth, including some of the *Lives* of the saints.

¹¹⁶ For example, in his contact with the Syro-Phoenician woman (7:27–29), and in his visceral response to the leper (1:43).

¹¹⁷ Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics*, 386. Bakhtin notes that while "the hero's life course is...depicted, his image in a purely biographical novel lacks any true process of becoming or development. The hero's life and fate change, they assume structure and evolve, but the hero himself remains essentially unchanged." (*BSHR*, 17.)

¹¹⁸ *BSHR*, 19.

¹¹⁹ *FTC*, 132.

Mark does not fit the pattern in ancient biography of tracing the life of the character from birth to death. There is no mention of birth or infancy stories, and nor does Mark's use of time fit with that of ancient biography: "As distinct from adventure and fairy-tale time, biographical time is quite realistic... works with extended periods, organic parts of the whole of life."¹²⁰ Mark's use of time, by contrast, is less realistic and more truncated: the events of the final week in the life of the Markan Jesus occupy almost as much of the narrative as does the whole of his ministry—which tends to be related at a breathless pace—while there is a total absence of any narration of his life before his Baptism. While the style and language used in Mark are more reminiscent of historical narratives in the Hebrew Scriptures, there are sufficient similarities with Greek biographies for ancient hearing-readers to "place them on the same bookshelf."¹²¹ However, Mark is not exclusively interested in the central character as would normally be expected: there is often a focus on secondary characters such as the disciples. Some insight is given into the inner thoughts of various characters—often inviting a response from the main character of Jesus, when these inner thoughts are perceived. While character development is minimal compared with modern literature, there is still some change evident among some characters. The disciples get progressively worse, for example. Spatial indicators assume greater realism in biography than is evident in Mark. Unlike Markan geography and other spatial indicators, which have literary and theological significance rather than the purely literal,¹²² in the biographical novel

[t]he contiguity and the links between hero and world are no longer organized as random and unexpected meetings on the high road... [C]ountries, cities, things, and so on enter into the biographical novel in significant ways and acquire a significant relationship to the whole life of the main hero.¹²³

Vines provides a helpful discussion of the links (or otherwise) between Mark and the chronotope of biography, and concludes that Mark's differences from Graeco-Roman biography include different social spaces, a lack of birth narratives as one of the usual boundaries of the exemplary

¹²⁰ *B SHR*, 17–18.

¹²¹ Marcus, *Mark*, 67.

¹²² See for example Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Narrative space and mythic meaning in Mark*, New Voices in Biblical Studies, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.

¹²³ *B SHR*, 18.

life, the anti-hero nature of Jesus compared with biography, the radical nature of Mark compared with the conservatism of Graeco-Roman biography, the different narrative modes, and the different approach to conflict in Mark.¹²⁴

By contrast, the chronotope of the road provides an important clue to Mark, especially the central 'Way' section of the Gospel. Yet if the 'road' chronotope is primarily motivic, it is possible that the underlying chronotope of this section is fundamentally the same as in the first eight chapters of Mark—that of the adventure romance. In the 'road' type of narrative, there is a closer connection between time and space—between time spent and ground covered. This chronotope has a close connection with the motif of meeting on the road. The central section of Mark is 'on the way', and the road chronotope may prove helpful in discussion of specific episodes from this section (that is Mark 8:22–10:52) especially since time spent and ground covered lead Jesus inexorably closer to his death. Thus, there is not the 'random' location of events indicated in the earlier section of the Gospel: here there is interest in Jesus' movement. Several important meetings occur which are significant in the overall context of the Gospel,¹²⁵ although the motif of meeting cannot be confined just to the central section.

In a similar manner, the 'road' also provides moments of recognition or non-recognition; yet such also cannot be confined to the central section of Mark. The concealment of Lucius' identity in *Apulei metamorphoseon* creates similar tensions to those created in relation to the central character of Jesus in Mark: Lucius has been metamorphosed into an ass and is later transformed back to his human state. Jesus, by contrast, is only once metamorphosed into the real (divine) state outlined in the Gospel's prefatory title (9:2–8), whereas his usual state essentially conceals his real identity. Recognition and non-recognition are motifs that are evident throughout Mark.

At the point of meeting, a further chronotope becomes significant: the chronotope of the threshold. This involves a crisis and breaking point in a life: the word 'threshold' has everyday connotations, and Bakhtin uses it of the decision (or indecision) whereby a life is changed or fails to change. Fear of stepping over the threshold leads to this failure to

¹²⁴ Vines, *Markan genre*, 80–88, 122–125.

¹²⁵ For example, the encounter with the blind men (Mark 8:22–26, and 10:46–52 after which Bartimaeus follows 'on the way'), and the 'meeting' involved with the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2–13) all occur 'on the way.'

change. Failure to step over the threshold is as fraught with meaning as the decision to respond positively to the crisis. Bakhtin maintains that in the threshold chronotope, “time is essentially instantaneous; it is as if it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of biographical time.”¹²⁶ Bakhtin shows that threshold dialogues were widespread in Graeco-Roman literature, especially in Socratic dialogues and in Menippean satires.¹²⁷ It is the latter that Bakhtin maintains had a profound impact on Christian literature. The threshold is critically important in understanding character development in literature: unlike many modern novels (such as Jane Austen’s) which reflect gradual, sometimes ponderous development, character development at the threshold depends on much more punctuated, defining moments. Vines appears to consider the chronotope of crisis/conflict as the key to Mark,¹²⁸ but equally the element of conflict could relate to dialogical thresholds at which carnival agons occur. There would appear to be sufficient similarity between Vines’ conflict chronotope and Bakhtin’s threshold chronotope to suggest a fundamental unity between them.¹²⁹

Bakhtin recognised the value of exploring the relationship between his two great concepts of chronotope and dialogue. Dialogue occurs within a given chronotope, and chronotopes can interact dialogically with one other (yet the two remain distinct). It is because of the possibility of chronotopic dialogue that genres are shaped and changed.

¹²⁶ *FTC*, 248.

¹²⁷ McCracken notes this important point (“Boundary”, 38). Bakhtin considers the connection between threshold and Socratic dialogue, and with menippea, in *PDP*, 106–178. It is from the ‘soil’ of the Socratic dialogue that arises “a special type of ‘dialogue on the threshold’...which became very widespread in Hellenistic and Roman literature.” (*PDP*, 111). Links with the three-planed construction of menippea (for example the threshold between this world and the nether world) are detailed by Bakhtin (*PDP*, 116), and the space of familiar contact (typical of carnival) becomes a key threshold. Since the threshold chronotope has close connections with the menippea, it is to be expected, therefore, that carnivalesque elements would be evident, given the close connection between the menippea and carnival.

¹²⁸ Vines, *Markan genre*, 144–160.

¹²⁹ Bakhtin (*FTC*, 248) notes that “the threshold and related chronotopes...are the main places of action...where crisis events occur, the falls, the resurrections,...decisions that determine the whole life of a man [sic].” Vines, (*Markan genre*, 147) notes that the Jewish novel involves “a crisis of decision for God’s people;...their response to this moment of crisis is the central concern of the narrative. The crisis is resolved through a pious human who acts as God’s agent,...[and] secures victory for God’s people and thereby protects the integrity of God’s kingdom.”

The transfer of style from one genre to another not only alters the way a style sounds, under conditions of a genre unnatural to it, but also violates or renews the given genre.¹³⁰

Mark's 'genre-memory' involves a dialogical interaction of such chronotopes as that of 'adventure time' and 'threshold.' If the genre of 'novel' is seen as being a primary vehicle for the Gospel, the Protean capacity of the novel genre to accept and incorporate such change—especially under the influence of carnival—provides a basis for understanding why Mark's Gospel appears to be a separate 'genre', linked but distinct from other generic forms such as aretology, and the symposium. The possibility that more than one chronotope may underlie Mark, and that there is a 'dialogue of chronotopes' may help to explain the shift in style between the passion narrative and the material that precedes it. Such dialogue of chronotopes is then further altered—and even congealed—with the influence of carnival.

Multi-level dialogue and synchronic and diachronic approaches

What becomes apparent from this discussion of dialogue, however, is that it may provide opportunities for the uniting of diachronic and synchronic approaches to textual interpretation. Newsom comments that

[t]he Bakhtinian emphasis on the *idea* in all its interactions challenges the tendency of biblical studies to let historical particularity isolate the text from substantive engagement with other discourses.¹³¹

The concept of dialogue—in this case, represented at three different levels—provides the possibility of such engagement with other discourses. First-level dialogue provides the opportunity for issues within the text surrounding the characters themselves to be considered. Several types of synchronic approach can be helpful here, together with other disciplines such as socio-cultural analysis. Second-level dialogue provides a possibility for examination of the impact of the text on the hearing-reader, especially where this involves 'word-with-a-sideward-glance' or 'word-with-a-loop-hole'. Thus, reader-response issues, and considerations of rhetoric become important here. There is also the possibility of third-level dialogue—inter-textually and co-textually—which will take into

¹³⁰ PSG, 66.

¹³¹ Carol Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible and dialogic truth," *Journal of religion*, 76, 1996, 306.

account chronotopic elements and the Markan genre-memory. Thus, as well as issues concerning reconstruction of the original audience, it is possible to ask serious questions concerning interpretative issues.¹³² For the purposes of this study, dialogue will be considered at all three levels: between interindividual characters, in terms of heteroglossia within the text, and among various speech genres and their secondary derivatives that are formative for the Markan 'genre memory'.

Bakhtin, Carnival & Mark

If dialogue was a central tenet of Bakhtin's thought, carnival was the great obsession especially of the middle period of his life, and the most controversial of his categories. Indeed, it could be argued that there is nothing in carnival that could have any relationship with gospel, since carnival appears to be as profane as gospel is sacred. Especially this is so if Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his world* is examined without the counterbalancing of his other writings. In *Rabelais*, there is an emphasis on bodily orifices rather than the boundaries, since such orifices *violate* the boundary between individuals and their environment. Bakhtin's examination of different 'cycles' in *Rabelais*, ranging from eating and drinking, to defecation and copulation, provide such an emphasis on the lower-body stratum as to cause some scholars to consider the whole notion of carnival as negative and degenerative energy,¹³³ and a radical departure from the Christian anthropology of Bakhtin's earlier years.¹³⁴ The concept of carnival can elicit a certain wariness. Emerson speaks of

a certain nervousness about carnival in practice—its potential for anarchy and victimization—has tended to encourage a demonization of carnival

¹³² For example, the nature of the impact of the Jerusalem Church upon the Markan community. It could be considered that the Jerusalem Church is shown in a negative way through the characterisation of Mary the mother of Jesus and also Peter because of a dialogue occurring historically between the two communities. See, for example: Weeden, *Mark*; J.B. Tyson, "The blindness of the disciples in Mark," *JBL* 80, 1961, 261–68; J.D. Crossan, "Mark and the relatives of Jesus," *NovT* 15, 1973, 81–113.

¹³³ For example, Sergei Averintsev, Konstantin Isupov, Mikhail Ryklin, and others.

¹³⁴ Discomfort with the blending of carnival and Christian elements arose in the late 20th century CE over 'Piss Christ'—a piece of (post-modern) art that placed a crucifix in a vessel of urine. The artist could well have been described as 'Rabelaisian' in his approach!

rather than a celebration of its possibly sacral roots. Many Russians would concur with Natalie Reed's wary remark in response to Turbin's (obviously exultant) recollection of Bakhtin's insistence that the Gospels were carnival, too: 'Indeed they are. Up to and including the mob-lynching of Christ.'¹³⁵

Some might see a place for examination of carnivalesque influences in Hebrew Bible subtexts,¹³⁶ but not in the New Testament. By contrast, others have viewed carnival positively—even noting points of integration into a Christian context, such as incarnation and Christology.¹³⁷ Indeed, following the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, there was a growing tendency to assimilate Bakhtin's thought to Russian theology. Generally, this approach has found more affinities with carnival as described in Bakhtin's later period, rather than with the Rabelaisian carnivalesque. A more neutral ground is adopted by Vitaly Makhlin, who sees "carnival as a metaphysics of 'laughing outsideness.'"¹³⁸ He acknowledges that we might laugh at the absurdity of our own position as essentially 'outsiders', and at our inability to be self-determining. Thus laughter becomes the (coping?) mechanism by which we can see our comparative insignificance, and yet continue to participate in a world that is anything but utopian!

The connection between carnival and Christian writings is also made by Bakhtin himself.

Christian narrative also underwent direct carnivalization (independently of the influence of the carnivalized menippea)... Thus ancient Christian narrative literature... was permeated by elements of the menippea and carnivalization.¹³⁹

Whether carnival is viewed positively or otherwise, it remains one of Bakhtin's central constructs. It relates especially to unfinalisability: nowhere does Bakhtin stress unfinalisability as much as in his writings about carnival. In *Rabelais*, unfinalisability becomes the sole, supreme value. While dialogue between interindividual characters means that

¹³⁵ Emerson, *First hundred years*, 175.

¹³⁶ For example, Konstantin Isupov, Kenneth Craig.

¹³⁷ For example, Alexandar Mihailovic, Charles Lock, Ruth Coates.

¹³⁸ Makhlin is quoted in translation in Caryl Emerson, *The first hundred years of Mikhail Bakhtin*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997, 197.

¹³⁹ *PDP*, 135.

character can never be considered to be completely finalisable, carnival affects character at the level of genre.¹⁴⁰

Bakhtin is not systematic in his use of terminology, but for the sake of clarity a distinction can be made between something that is *carnivalised* (that is, significantly influenced by carnival) as it actually occurs; and the carnivalesque which is reflective of literary patterns. The carnivalesque can be recognised in textual images, plot devices, and language itself. Ultimately, it is a ‘mind-set’ which removes the divide between actor and spectator, since carnival is always ‘without footlights’, and therefore invites the hearing-reader into the text in ways that transcend dialogue itself.

While dialogue always presupposes otherness, whether of two interindividual characters, or when the hearing-reader is drawn to the threshold of the text, by contrast carnival “strives everywhere toward *fusion*, which makes true dialogue impossible.”¹⁴¹ At the same time, carnival laughter is the most radical form of dialogue, since it resists and undermines the dominant authority systems and thus makes dialogue possible. Perhaps Bakhtin intended carnival and dialogue to be alternating matrices around which discourse revolves. It is for this reason that dialogue as it occurs within specific chronotopes will form one structuring matrix (with the other being carnival) throughout this consideration of Markan characterisation.

Danow, in seeking to define the spirit of carnival and the carnivalesque, considers it, in

paradoxical, oxymoronic fashion, ‘secular blasphemy’...an irresolvable paradox that is seemingly universal and archetypal, that subverts an established value system in order to institute one of its own, that corrupts language and behavioural codes in the work of creating new ones seemingly designed exclusively to displace old ones, and that superimposes one paradox upon another until the original remains forever hidden, undisturbed and unseen.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Morson and Emerson (*Prosaics*, 93), note that Bakhtin “treats literary history as an ongoing battle between the spirit of ‘finalized’ or ‘completed’ genres, with their ‘readymade’ truths and established canons, and the eternally itinerant novel, the scion of carnival and the prophet of pure becoming.”

¹⁴¹ Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics*, 227.

¹⁴² David K. Danow, *The spirit of carnival: magical realism and the grotesque*, Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1995, 63.

In this sense, the application of the term ‘carnival’ to Mark’s Gospel seems appropriate: the repeated capacity of the Markan Jesus to subvert the value system of the dominant hegemony and create new behavioural codes, is clearly evident.

Bakhtin’s ‘middle period’ certainly focuses on carnival—especially in *Rabelais and his world*—in ways which appear anarchic, but his later writings tend to promote a more ‘responsible carnival’, for example in the insertion of a new chapter into *Problems of Dostoevsky’s poetics*, and the essay on “Forms of time and chronotope in the novel.”¹⁴³ In this later sense, carnival tends to be more positive and humanist,¹⁴⁴ and does not concentrate predominantly on the activities of the “lower body stratum.”¹⁴⁵ Carnival broke down the traditional boundaries within society—the inherent differences among classes—and often resulted in inversions of ‘normal’ social interaction, usually accompanied by ambivalent laughter, mockery, and ridicule; and sometimes by obscenities, indecency, and the profaning of the sacred. Bodies are ‘exchanged’ symbolically, through changing masks or costumes, and the inversion of social ranks. Material exchange—especially in relation to bodily functions—is related to a key image at the centre of carnival (and demonstrating its essential ambivalence): namely, that of ‘pregnant death’—death itself being linked with birth and renewal.

[The body] is never finished, never completed: it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world... Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up another body—all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. In all these events, the beginning and end of life are closely linked and interwoven.¹⁴⁶

Carnival is located in folk culture and folk humour derived in part from ancient agrarian festivals, and is evidenced in many forms throughout history, including—importantly for the period in which the Gospels developed—the Roman Saturnalia.¹⁴⁷ During this festival there was

¹⁴³ *PDP*, 101–180; *FTC*, 84–258.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Humanist’ in the philosophical sense.

¹⁴⁵ Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics*, 439.

¹⁴⁶ *RW*, 317.

¹⁴⁷ This celebrated the temporary return of Saturn’s rule, characterised by social equality, and evidenced by carousing of masters and slaves together.

considerable freedom and laughter, evidenced within reversals and inversions (such as the slave-master relationship). Bakhtin notes that the primary carnival reversal or inversion “is the *mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king*”¹⁴⁸ Primary carnival expressions involve the pairing of opposites: crownings and uncrownings,¹⁴⁹ kings and fools, debasement and exaltation. In carnival, dogma and authority are replaced by ridicule and laughter, feast replaces fast, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ become reversed, the ‘sacred’ is degraded by the ‘secular’, social hierarchies are inverted, spatial and bodily barriers or boundaries are transgressed, and vulgarity and indulgence are the norm.

Carnival celebrates the destruction of the old and the birth of the new world—the new year, the new spring, the new kingdom. The old world that has been destroyed is offered together with the new world and is represented with it as the dying part of the dual body. This is why in carnivalesque images there is so much turnabout, so many opposite faces and intentionally upset proportions.¹⁵⁰

Carnival thus expresses something of the struggle between folk culture and ‘official’ culture—a struggle that is always in danger of decline through suppression by the dominant (cultural) hegemony. But it could be argued that the key ‘target’ of carnival is less directly the dominant hegemony as much as it is the enslavement of the human spirit to fear.¹⁵¹ Carnival laughter, founded within folk humour, then becomes a fear-destroying mechanism that liberates even in the face of official seriousness. Morson and Emerson argue that

[a]ccording to Bakhtin, the ancient world witnessed a...decline [in folk humour]. Folkloric laughter first gave way to menippean satire... [whose] laughing images...were already somewhat compromised by ‘moral meaning’...In the early Christian era, laughter was domesticated or exiled altogether.¹⁵²

Bakhtin argued that in the early formative period of Christianity, there arose a new serio-comical genre of the menippea, within which the characteristic narrative forms in the New Testament took shape. While

¹⁴⁸ *PDP*, 124.

¹⁴⁹ The crown is an important image for the literary carnivalesque, and this is no less so in Mark, where some crowns are figurative, and others symbolic.

¹⁵⁰ *RW*, 410.

¹⁵¹ As argued, for example, by Ruth Coates, *Christianity in Bakhtin—God and the exiled author*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 126.

¹⁵² Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics*, 454.

Bakhtin regarded epic, tragedy and history as serious genres, the serio-comical genre¹⁵³ included the Socratic dialogues, literature derived from symposia, and the menippean satires.¹⁵⁴

Bakhtin regards the account...of the 'King of the Jews' entering the Jewish capital on a lonely donkey and the crown of thorns that is an anticrown, along with other details in the life of Christ that are similarly gestures of the most radical overturning of authority, as indications that Biblical narrative is permeated by menippean carnivalization.¹⁵⁵

Bakhtin's claims for the menippea may be over-reaching, but his point is valid that it was in this literary context that the carnivalesque developed. It was also this literary context in which the novel genre developed with its carnivalesque forms, and correspondingly, that saw the rise of new Christian literature.

The introduction of the literary carnivalesque into Mark is part of the process of Mark engaging in dialogue with various other generic forms—including speech genres. The extent to which Mark is an oral gospel rather than a written gospel raises the whole question of whether there is a process of carnivalisation or whether we are dealing with the literary carnivalesque. Thus, it becomes a question of whether characters were historically 'carnivalised' in their original *Sitz im Leben* or in the oral tradition soon after, or whether carnivalesque elements have been introduced by the author. Whatever the case, there would seem to be two distinct aspects to carnival in Mark. These two reflect the different faces of carnival. On the one hand in the first half of the Gospel, we are dealing with the concept of carnival laughter; traditional understandings of carnival where spatial and bodily barriers are transgressed; reversals occur that are, to some extent, 'comic'. Thus, there is an implied crowning-uncrowning (in the Baptism-Temptation) as Jesus is confirmed as Son of God, and then immediately faces wilderness temptation and a series of misunderstandings concerning his identity. This divine crowning-uncrowning will mirror the human crowning-uncrowning that will occur with the entry to Jerusalem and subsequent passion.

¹⁵³ "At the close of classical antiquity, and again in the epoch of Hellenism, a number of genres coalesced and developed,...constituting a special realm of literature, which the ancients themselves very expressively called *σπουδογέλοιοι*, that is, the realm of the serio-comical." *PDP*, 106.

¹⁵⁴ *EN*, 21–22.

¹⁵⁵ Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 150.

In the healing ministry that occurs in Galilee, the transgression of bodily barriers (an important characteristic of carnival) assumes a higher significance when it is considered that the ritual purity laws imposed by the dominant hegemony prevents the very touching that will occur in most healing episodes. The woman with the haemorrhage, and the dead child are both indicative of attempts by people to negate Jesus' ritual purity. Jesus shames himself by transgressing these bodily barriers. The use of bodily fluids such as saliva (Mark 7:33; 8:23)—not mentioned in the other Synoptic Gospels—has similar indications of the carnival.

Controversies occurring around the issue of eating have a carnivalesque tone to them: the Pharisees' query (Mark 2:16) concerning Jesus ἐσθίει μετὰ τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν καὶ τελωνῶν; and the question concerning the disciples eating with κοινᾷς χερσίν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἀνίπτοις (Mark 7:2); together with the ensuing discourse from Jesus concerning defilement (Mark 7:15–16) οὐδέν ἐστιν ἔξωθεν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτὸν ὃ δύναται κοινῶσαι αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκπορευόμενά ἐστιν τὰ κοινούντα τὸν ἄνθρωπον. Indeed, the fast-replaced-by-feast motif of carnival is expressed directly in Mark 2:19–20, in the discussion concerning the disciples' failure to fast.

Even more 'serious' pericopae in the first section of Mark, such as the beheading of the Baptizer, have carnival (and sometimes almost Rabelaisian) elements. For example, there is an intersection (after the pattern of Rabelais) of eating elements with death and rebirth elements in Mark 6:14–29: the pericope opens with a reference to Herod considering Jesus to be the Baptizer *redivivus* (rebirth), then moves analeptically to the occasion of the birthday banquet (eating), at which John is beheaded (death) and his head brought on a platter to be symbolically 'eaten' (!) by Herodias and her daughter (eating).

In the passion narrative, however, the shadow side of carnival predominates. Bernstein speaks of bitter carnival, which he seeks to locate as a negative and bitter strand within the Saturnalia; and it is possible that the tragic aspects of carnival are represented here.¹⁵⁶ Bernstein's chief characteristic of bitter carnival—revenge—seems to be missing

¹⁵⁶ Bernstein, *Bitter carnival*. Bernstein's approach is centred around Nietzsche's term *ressentiment*; an aspect which also permeates Bernstein's approach to dialogism (in "Poetics of resentment," in G. Morson and C. Emerson, *Rethinking Bakhtin: extensions and challenges*, Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1989, 197–223).

here; although since carnival is serio-comical in nature it need not be as completely negative and bitter as Bernstein suggests. The only revenge motive indicated by the evangelist, is attributed by Pilate to the enemies of Jesus (Mark 15:10): ἐγίνωσκεν γὰρ ὅτι διὰ φθόνον παραδεδώκεισαν αὐτὸν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς. As carnival subverts the dominant hegemony, it is unlikely that carnival elements would be on the ideological horizon of these characters!¹⁵⁷

Since the carnivalesque is a serio-comical 'genre', however, it seems likely that both comic and tragic elements will be present throughout the Gospel, but that the tragic element dominates in the passion narrative. Nevertheless, the more 'comic' elements of carnival can still be traced in the passion narrative: the extravagance of the anointing at Bethany (Mark 14:3–9), including the comedy of the famous un-named woman; the young man who flees naked (Mark 14:51–52); and even perhaps the triple failure of the inner core of disciples to stay awake during the Gethsemane experience (Mark 14:32–42). Ruth Coates makes the point that

Jesus is the incarnated (debased) god who, finding himself in the corrupted world, is obliged, like the fool and the novelist after him, to don a mask in order to confound the status quo whilst himself remaining untainted by it. During the course of his ministry he is accused of both madness and folly, and eventually he is convicted as a rogue. His parables resemble the riddles of the fool, opaque to all but initiates into the kingdom governed by an alternative logic; his 'naïve' claims and his demands, rendered more lunatic by their unabashed radicalness, by not bowing to the present order, are exercises in 'not understanding' it. As the carnival king he dwells in a realm at once real and ideal, like the rogue, clown and fool creating his 'own special little world', his own chronotope, around him.¹⁵⁸

This reference to the key carnivalesque characters of rogue, clown and fool provides an interpretative key to one of the more intriguing literary devices in Mark: the secrecy motif. Even this motif, so often referred to wherein Jesus seeks to cover his identity, but manifestly

¹⁵⁷ A question to consider in this context relates to which *is* the dominant hegemony needing subverting for Mark—the Romans or the chief priests. Both could be considered to be targets for carnival subversion at various points.

¹⁵⁸ Coates, *Christianity*, 144. Coates' monograph is devoted to drawing attention to Christian motifs in Bakhtin. Her desire to make the connections results in some tenuous linkages; for example that of carnival laughter and Christian love seems not entirely successful.

fails to do so, is also reflective of carnival. The dominant hegemony imposes uniformity by strict regulation concerning social status, and this is usually associated with ritual boundaries. Against such a rigid hierarchy are introduced “accessory rituals of carnival, for example, disguise—that is, carnivalistic shifts of clothing and of positions and destinies in life...”¹⁵⁹ Disguises—especially masks—conceal identity, and allow for the possibility of transformation. Masks express ambiguity: identities unmasked could be too monolithic and supportive of official seriousness. Jesus wears a mask in that his true identity remains effectively concealed until the (final?) ‘unmasking’ in the passion and beyond. While the duplicity of Jesus’ opponents (not to mention Judas) is a form of mask, the key mask in the Gospel is that of Jesus as the carnival clown.

The clown is one of the three marginalised characters—rogue, clown and fool—associated with the concept of carnival laughter who create an alternative reality around themselves. Bakhtin comments on a distinctive characteristic held by each of these, arguing that they possess:

the right to be ‘other’ in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available; none of these categories quite suits them, they see the underside and the falseness of every situation. Therefore, they can exploit any position they choose, but only as a mask... [Clowns are] ‘not of this world’ and therefore possess their own special rights and privileges. These figures are laughed at by others, and *themselves* as well... [They] represent a metamorphosis of tsar and god—but the transformed figures are located in the nether world, in death (cf. in Roman Saturnalia and in Christ’s passion the analogous feature of the metamorphosis of god or ruler into slave, criminal or fool).¹⁶⁰

The passion predictions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34) combine with the passion narrative as an example of ‘pregnant death’—death is linked to birth in the carnivalesque manner. The extent of misunderstanding on behalf of the disciples is expressive of the carnivalesque tendency for the carnival clown to be misunderstood.

Carnavalesque elements may be present to the hearing-reader even when carnival itself may not have been experienced directly within the story-world of the characters. Certainly, carnival elements may be

¹⁵⁹ *PDP*, 125.

¹⁶⁰ *FTC*, 159–162.

suggested by the actions of various characters—especially Jesus—as a carnival inversion that undermines the authority of the Pharisees and ruling classes. But the suggestion of Robert Brawley that the carnivalisation of Jesus is attempted by Jesus’ enemies, fails to understand the true nature of carnival as subversive of the dominant hegemony, and therefore misses the point.¹⁶¹ He notes *inter alia* the soldiers’ mocking of Jesus as a (carnival) king, the division of his clothing, the inscription on the cross, the day-night inversion, and the tearing of the temple curtain. If Brawley is claiming that carnival elements are being imposed on Jesus by his enemies, then this is occurring within the ‘story world’ of the Gospel. In itself, this presents us with a hermeneutical problem, because it is Jesus, rather than his enemies, who subverts the dominant hegemony. Brawley’s argument depends on a ‘morphology’ of the carnivalesque, which delineates many of the carnival elements. He seems unable to accept, however, that different carnivalesque elements may be evident in a narrative without all necessarily being required to be effective. For example, he claims that in the account of the eve of the Passion, “the morphology fails from the perspective of Jesus and his disciples because Passover is a family feast celebrated in the privacy of homes”¹⁶² and therefore fails to meet the public dimension of carnival.

Thus Brawley argues that because this element of the carnival is absent (or controverted) within the text, Jesus is unable to be carnivalised. He seems not to have maintained adequately the distinction—even though he mentions it himself—between carnival values which may be evident, and the full literary idiom of the carnivalesque.¹⁶³ To claim that the Gospel writer is resisting the carnivalisation of Jesus presupposes that the evangelist is unable to control the text, unless the claim is being made that Luke is resisting carnivalesque elements in the Markan text from which he is working. Since several of the issues that Brawley addresses refer to material that is exclusive to Luke, this

¹⁶¹ While Robert Brawley (“Resistance to the carnivalization of Jesus: Scripture in the Lucan passion narrative” in *Semeia* 69/70, 1995) is focussing on carnivalisation evidenced within Luke’s Gospel, its application to Mark is certainly appropriate. Unfortunately, he seems to have misunderstood carnivalisation in Bakhtin’s thought, and an otherwise well-researched article becomes flawed.

¹⁶² Brawley, *Resistance*, 38.

¹⁶³ Brawley, *Resistance*, 34.

seems unlikely.¹⁶⁴ The traditional apparatus of carnival—including mock crownings and uncrownings, and the superscription on the cross—are used deliberately by Mark as carnivalesque elements, and are not (as Brawley suggests in Luke, at least) an attempt by the characters to carnivalise Jesus against the author's wishes. This is an aspect of the carnivalesque—it is a Markan device that has pervaded the whole Gospel and contributes meaningfully to its apprehension as εὐαγγέλιον within common/vulgar society. Daniel Boyarin also critiques Brawley's approach, preferring to

relocate the carnivalesque...not in the diegetic world of the mockers of Jesus but in the text itself. The skandalon of the Cross is a carnival...Brawley has missed an opportunity offered by his own insight by locating the carnivalesque in Luke's Passion too narrowly in the mockers of Jesus and not in Jesus himself...Jesus is the carnivalesque figure of rebellion; the mockers are the established order who, nevertheless, within the world of the text indicate just how much of a scandal, a Carnival, a crucified king and saviour is.¹⁶⁵

There is a carnivalesque aspect to the king—crowned and uncrowned—who ultimately suffers at the hands of the dominant classes of the day. The ultimate inversion occurs when the fact that Jesus is Son of God from the prefatory title is then totally reversed in the passion narrative. The enemies of Jesus refuse to cross the threshold when invited to the boundary by Jesus; instead they unwittingly serve the irony of bitter carnival—the crucifixion of the One who is Son of God.

The connection between carnival and dialogue becomes more apparent here: although moving in different directions as conceptual frameworks, carnival and dialogue connect in the study of characterisation in two main ways. The first recognises carnival as a boundary theme; the dialogic interaction that occurs between characters at the threshold or boundary between each other, and at the threshold of the world itself, concerns the response of each interindividual character to the dialogue of the carnival king—Jesus. The second involves the concept of genre-memory, in that there is a dialogue that occurs between an author's 'text' on the one hand, and generic contacts with extant

¹⁶⁴ For example, see Brawley's references to the discussion about the swords at the Last Supper (Brawley, *Resistance*, 39); to Jesus' treatment at the hands of Herod (Brawley, *Resistance*, 45), and to the weeping women (Brawley, *Resistance*, 47).

¹⁶⁵ Daniel Boyarin, "Issues for further discussion: a response," in *Semeia* 69/70, 1995, 294.

literature with which the author and hearing-readers are familiar on the other. Carnival forms then reduce and distort beyond recognition those generic contacts.

The wider context—carnavalesque series and their impact

Characters in various passages enter into dialogue with other characters in apparently remote pericopae because of several ‘series’ typical of the carnivalesque that appear to be evident in Mark. It could be argued that such series might not indicate any authorial intent: did Mark intend an eating series, for example, or does its detection within the text reflect a post-modern, post-Bakhtinian re-reading? The concept of genre-memory would indicate, however, that just as generic contacts or influences can shape the author’s work, elements of the carnivalesque can enter the text whether this is a conscious intention of the author or otherwise. The identification of these elements, whether they are intentional or not, illuminates the common assumptions and world-view of the author and hearing-readers. The carnivalesque nature of individual passages will be further considered in their relevant chapters below; however, to the extent that a passage is part of a carnivalesque ‘series,’ there is dialogue occurring between the characterisation within a passage and that in related pericopae. These series become important for an understanding of characterisation, since they provide interpretative keys for understanding some of the key characters and motifs surrounding them.

The first series to be considered is the most obvious one: an eating series (food and/or drink) can be discerned from Mark 5:11–8:14–21. While eating/food/drink motifs can be found as early as Mark 2:16 (where the scribes of the Pharisees question Jesus about eating with sinners and tax collectors), in the discussions about fasting (Mark 2:18–20) and Sabbath food (Mark 2:23–26), and in the seed parables (Mark 4:1–32), these do not represent the strongest elements of carnival in that there is no distinctive sense of carnivalesque inversion or other carnivalesque elements except that Jesus is engaged in ‘transgressive’ eating and drinking. To some extent, eating with tax-collectors and sinners foreshadows a carnival feasting, and inversion of social rank.

With the pericope concerning the healing of the Gerasene demoniac, however, the carnivalesque eating ‘series’ begins in earnest. The fate of the pigs in Mark 5:13 (...εἰσῆλθον εἰς τοὺς χοίρους, καὶ ὥρμησεν ἡ ἀγέλη κατὰ τοῦ κρημνοῦ εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, ὥς δισχίλιοι καὶ

ἐπνίγοντο...) relates to the destruction of what is possibly the food supply of a nearby Roman garrison.¹⁶⁶ The carnivalesque laughter involved with Jesus expelling the 'legion' of evil spirits into the food supply of the Roman legion—and thereby destroying both—is subversive of the might of Rome, and also of the Jewish purity laws, since it connects with the eating saying of Mark 7:15–16. The unclean spirits come out of the man, and enter the ritually 'unclean' animals.

When Jesus orders Jairus' daughter to be given something to eat in Mark 5:43, although raised to life, she is still ritually 'unclean'. Does she need food? Perhaps. But the carnivalesque irony associated with Jesus' instruction may be that the daughter of a synagogue ruler will be eating *before* she has undergone ritual purification, a connection that the hearing-reader should make with the criticism (by Pharisees and teachers) of the disciples eating with 'unclean' hands (Mark 7:1–5).

The passage concerning the Baptizer follows in this series, and raises issues concerning the 'clean' word of the Baptizer being swallowed by the 'unclean' Herodias—doubly unclean, because of the shady nature of her liaison with Herod, and because she is (symbolically) eating the head of a dead man! This text will be explored further in the next chapter.

The feeding of five thousand 'clean' people, and its related discussion, occurs next in the series (Mark 6:30–44). The feeding miracle itself has carnivalesque elements of the fantastic (including the large number of baskets of waste food!), but it is in the discussion about the loaves that carnival elements are most clearly present (Mark 8:14–21). The fantastic (the feeding miracles of Mark 6:30–44 and Mark 8:1–9) becomes the basis for testing of a philosophical idea: that there is enough bread left over for others, including the 'unclean' Gentiles. This idea has already been explored in the discussion concerning 'clean' and 'unclean' (Mark 7:14–23). Here, Jesus the carnival clown, subverts the dominant hegemony represented by the Pharisees and teachers of the law *from Jerusalem*, by openly criticising them and effectively inverting the normal categories of clean and unclean: καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα (Mark 7:19).

¹⁶⁶ Ched Myers (*Binding the strong man: a political reading of Mark's story of Jesus*, New York: Orbis, 1990, 190–194) connects the exorcism with political repudiation of Rome as represented in the occupying forces in the area. See also Richard Dormandy "The expulsion of Legion—a political reading of Mark 5:1–20" *Expository Times*, July 2000, vol. 111, 10, 334–337.

It is at this point that the ‘eating series’ intersects with a ‘defecation series’ and further explicates the clean-unclean dichotomy on re-reading the narrative.¹⁶⁷ Jesus insists that since food goes into a person, passes through the body and out into the sewer (εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν καὶ εἰς τὸν ἀφεδρῶνα ἐκπορεύεται), it is not of itself ‘unclean’; rather uncleanness stems from the heart. Tracing back to the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1–13), the unclean spirits are expelled (symbolically ‘defecated’) and ‘flushed’ via the pigs into the sea.¹⁶⁸ Out of his heart comes the good news/kerygma (Mark 5:20) and the man becomes internally cleansed. In Mark 6:14–29, by comparison, Herodias ‘eats’ John’s head/word, but the pure message cannot be stopped—even the expelled (defecated) head is not defiling; rather the head/word continues, living on in the Baptist’s disciples, and ultimately in Jesus’ proclamation. It is from within Herodias, not from what she eats, that defilement comes. The list (Mark 7:21–22) of what constitutes ‘uncleanness’ includes many motivations that could be attributed to various Markan characters.¹⁶⁹

The eating series continues at Mark 7:24–30 with the conversation between Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman. Jesus’ withdrawal to the region of Tyre indicates a desire for privacy rather than a deliberate mission to Gentiles. The dialogue that occurs between Jesus and the woman, that centres around τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων, connects with the two feedings (Mark 6:30–44; 8:1–9).¹⁷⁰ Jesus’ response to her concerning the children’s bread—probably a word-with-a-sideward-glance to the hearing-reader—returns the dialogue to the clean-unclean distinctions. The woman’s answers cause Jesus to cross social boundaries to

¹⁶⁷ The claim could be made that the defecation series does not exist; however, the graphic choice of words on Jesus’ lips at 7:19 indicates a small series is evident on re-reading in light of these words. Reed (*Dialogues*, 81), who has noted the eating motif throughout Mark, comments on the ‘scatological double entendre’ evident in Jesus’ saying here.

¹⁶⁸ Although the idea of flushing is clearly a modern one, the concept of disposal via the ‘sewer’ or ‘privy’ (εἰς τὸν ἀφεδρῶνα) is present in the text (Mark 7:19); here the pigs are effectively the ‘conduit’ for disposal of the unclean spirits into the sea (Mark 5:13).

¹⁶⁹ Various motivations are attributed to characters including Herodias’ murderous intent (Mark 6:19), the Pharisees’ hypocrisy (Mark 12:15), the scribes’ pride (Mark 12:38–40) and the chief priest’s envy (Mark 15:10).

¹⁷⁰ Athol Gill (“Women ministers in the Gospel of Mark” *Australian Biblical Review* XXXV 1987, 16; and “Beyond the boundaries: Marcan mission perspectives for today’s church,” in Paul Beasley-Murray (ed.), *Mission to the world*, supplement to *Baptist Quarterly*, 1991, 37–39) correctly makes this connection.

provide ‘clean’ crumbs for ‘unclean’ dogs/Gentiles, and consequently the unclean spirit is expelled from the woman’s daughter.

There is a stark contrast between this Gentile woman and her daughter on the one hand, and Herodias and her daughter on the other. While Herodias and her daughter demand and devour the ‘clean’ Baptizer, thereby showing the ‘uncleanness’ of their inner character, this woman shows humility in the manner of her request: ἐλθοῦσα προσέπεσεν πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ (Mark 7:25). She and her daughter are content with what ‘crumbs’ Jesus will provide, and Jesus rewards the woman for her faith. Although an ‘unclean’ Gentile, she is shown to be ‘clean’ in her character.

Mark’s geographical and literary setting clearly connects the feeding of the four thousand with a ministry to Gentiles (Mark 8:1–10). Thus, in this pericope, bread is again given to ‘unclean’ recipients, and Jesus has crossed the usual social boundaries between Jew and Gentile, clean and unclean. However, this feeding also serves as the point from which the warning about the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod originates. The disciples have already witnessed one miraculous feeding, yet fail to show enough faith that Jesus can produce still more ‘crumbs’ for the ‘dogs’. Jesus’ warning in Mark 8:15 is against the ‘yeast’ of unbelief demonstrated by the Pharisees and Herod.¹⁷¹ The disciples, in their failure to understand the significance of the loaves (Mark 8:16–21), are coming close to the same level of unbelief demonstrated by Herod in Mark 6:14–16 where he has gained the wrong impression from the ‘mighty works.’ Reed notes that throughout Mark 6–8 there is a succession of episodes of extraordinary eating (as part of a larger pattern of transgressive eating and drinking by the Markan Jesus).

The juxtaposition of these episodes...provides a continuous [carnival subversion] of the rules of table fellowship in Jewish tradition and the general expectations about hospitality in ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean culture.¹⁷²

Having considered the eating series from Mark 5:1–8:21, and the intersecting defecation series (Mark 5:1–7:23), it is appropriate to consider

¹⁷¹ Robert Guelich (*Mark 1–8:26*, Dallas: Word Books, 1989, 423–4) draws the helpful comparison: noting their “failure to recognize Jesus as the one in whom God is uniquely and redemptively at work meeting the needs of those who entrust themselves to him... In Herod’s case the miracles ‘mislead’; in the Pharisees’ case they are inadequate.”

¹⁷² Reed *Dialogues*, 81.

the sexual series that can be observed from Mark 5:21. It is concentrated in Mark 6:17–29, but finds other points of contact through to the passion narrative. The sexual series is inextricably connected with honour-shame considerations. It commences with the narrative of the two women/wombs restored to life/fertility by (the male) Jesus (Mark 5:21–43).

In both cases, their wombs are dead: Jairus' daughter because the girl is dead, the haemorrhaging woman because her condition renders her infertile. In both cases, purity boundaries are crossed in the course of the healing. Jairus' daughter is dead, and therefore ritually unclean. She is also described as being twelve years old (Mark 5:42), and therefore technically of marriageable age; certainly it is possible that she may have attained the onset of menarche. To touch her—even if she is only 'sleeping'—is to risk the possibility of ritual impurity. That Jesus does touch her is indicative of the crossing of ritual purity boundaries. The older woman touches part of Jesus' garment. She has therefore 'crossed the boundary' of ritual purity, and rendered Jesus unclean. In both cases, however, contact with Jesus renders them 'clean' again, even as their wombs are restored to life.

By contrast, in Mark 6:17–29, the two wombs—Herodias and her daughter—are (presumably) alive. However, they deliver death to (the male) John, and indicate proleptically the fate of (the male) Jesus and the (male) disciples. The disciples leave on a mission, and their missional activity prompts the 'flashback' at Mark 6:17–29. As will be discussed in more detail later, the girl 'seduces' her father and his guests, and is—metaphorically speaking—sexually 'penetrated' by her father. Her demand, at the instigation of Herodias, effectively 'castrates' her father, who has no choice but to have John beheaded. The symbolic connection between the head and the male sexual organ means that Herodias 'castrates' (kills) her enemy.¹⁷³ She is (sexually) gratified when the Baptizer's head becomes food for her.

The sexual series continues to show faint echoes of the beheading story thereafter. The (male) disciples return in Mark 6:30, but the intercalation of the pericope concerning the beheading of the Baptizer shows the hearing-reader that the disciples must face the reality that

¹⁷³ The head is frequently symbolic of the phallus, representing male personhood and power. Thus the action of beheading is figurative of castration (cf. Janice Capel Anderson, "Feminist criticism: the dancing daughter," in J.C. Anderson and S. Moore, *Mark and method: new approaches in biblical studies*, Augsburg: Fortress Press, 1992, 126).

mission will eventually involve shame/castration/martyrdom. This theme of shame/castration/martyrdom is continued in Jesus' passion prediction at Mark 8:31—which is immediately, but unsuccessfully, refuted by Peter (Mark 8:32). The nature of true discipleship is made very clear by Jesus in the reversals at Mark 8:34–38: saving life is by way of losing it—ὅς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν (Mark 8:35). Refusal to be shamed/suffer martyrdom results in ultimate shame: ὅς γὰρ ἐὰν ἐπαισχυνθῇ με... καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπαισχυθήσεται αὐτὸν... (Mark 8:38). Two subsequent predictions of shame/castration/martyrdom occur (Mark 9:31; 10:33).

The sexual series continues to find echoes even in the passion narrative. The narrative of the Last Supper is proleptic of the 'castrated' body becoming food (thus reconnecting—although at a distance—with the eating series).¹⁷⁴ The Gethsemane arrest—in which identification is by a kiss (!) (Mark 14:44–45)—results in all of the disciples abandoning Jesus, with one follower fleeing naked (Mark 14:51–52). Although shamed (through his nakedness) he seeks to avoid the predicted shame/castration/martyrdom of Jesus' earlier warnings. Ultimately, Jesus will be also be 'shamed' through nakedness on the cross (Mark 15:24). Symbolically at least, Jesus' word is 'castrated' (killed) and in so doing becomes food in the same way that John's word had been earlier.

Application of Bakhtinian Categories to Mark

The application of Bakhtinian categories to characterisation within Mark requires several considerations. Within the matrix of the chronotope that appears to relate to a passage, dialogical interactions will be addressed and the influence of carnival considered. At first-level dialogue, it becomes inappropriate to support the concept of separate character-individuals, and thus it becomes important for us to consider character-zones, since it is impossible to establish an unequivocal boundary between a character and all other textual elements; each character is in constant interaction with others. Threshold encounters between interindividual characters therefore become an important first determinant in considering construction of character. At second-level dialogue, transactions occur between the author and the hearing-reader;

¹⁷⁴ Indeed, Marcus, (*Mark*, 403) maintains that the account of the Baptizer's beheading is a kind of demonic eucharist!

and especially between the hearing-reader and the voices in the text. At third-level dialogue it is possible to discern several generic contacts or influences that have shaped the text's 'genre-memory'. In the case of Markan characterisation, a significant generic contact would appear to be that of Graeco-Roman erotic novels.¹⁷⁵ For this reason, some comparisons can be drawn between the chosen Markan passages and some of the earliest of these Graeco-Roman novels. For the purposes of this discussion, characterisation will be considered from this Bakhtinian perspective as outlined: a pericope needs to be treated 'episodically' in terms of the three different levels of dialogue *and* in terms of carnival elements that may be present.

¹⁷⁵ Although clearly Mark is neither 'erotic' nor purely fiction!

CHAPTER TWO

'ADVENTURE' CHRONOTOPE AND COMIC CARNIVAL IN MARK 1–8

The 'Adventure' Chronotope

The first section of Mark's Gospel bears close similarities to the chronotope of adventure, with its stress on immediacy (the use of εὐθύς is frequent) and chance-encounters, and the comparative lack of precision concerning geographical considerations. It is for this reason that the adventure chronotope will be considered as the first structuring axis for discussion of this section of Mark.

The two previously mentioned examples of early Greek romance (*Ephesiaca* and *Callirhoe*) are excellent examples of this chronotope, and represent popular literature from which can be inferred some of the hearing and reading conventions of antiquity among ordinary people.

In this chronotope, events are neither causally linked, nor consequential. Space is effectively abstract since the events could occur virtually anywhere: for example, where pirates occur, they could be on any sea.

'Suddenly' and 'at just that moment' best characterize this type of time, for this time usually has its origin and comes into its own in just those places where the normal, pragmatic and premeditated course of events is interrupted—and provides an opening for sheer chance, which has its own specific logic. This logic is one of random contingency [*sovpadenië*], which is to say, chance simultaneity [meetings] and chance rupture [non-meeting], that is, a logic of random disjunctions in time as well. In this random contingency, 'earlier' and 'later' are crucially, even decisively, significant. Should something happen a minute earlier or a minute later, that is, should there be no chance simultaneity or chance disjunctions in time, there would be no plot at all, and nothing to write a novel about.¹

While the nature of time in Mark may not revolve around 'chance', nor depend on such things as fortune-telling, omens, prophetic dreams,

¹ *FTC*, 93. (See also *BSHR*, 11.)

oracles as in Greek romances, there is certainly an element of apparently random contingency involved in Mark, as well as comparative disconnectedness of ‘narrative time’ between various pericopae. Notable exceptions do occur wherever the Markan technique of intercalation is employed, but the connections are internal to the intercalated pericopae, and do not suggest close connectedness with other pericopae in terms of ‘narrative time’. The frequent, seemingly random, use of εὐθύς bears similarities especially with *Ephesiaca*, and to a slightly lesser extent with *Callirhoe*.² Purely statistical comparison of usage does not provide sufficient convincing evidence of close similarity, although it gives some comparative linguistic correlations. More extensive work needs to be done in this area.

Adventure time “consists of the most immediate units—moments, hours, days—snatched at random from the temporal process... ‘Day,’ ‘morning,’ and ‘night,’ [are]... settings for adventure action.”³ Thus, the Markan tendency to include redundant ‘doublet’ temporal indicators—both of which remain random and obscure—is indicative of the adventure chronotope.

The theme of secrecy, recognition and non-recognition is another important aspect of this chronotope, and draws immediate comparison with the recognition/non-recognition tensions that exist within Mark (for example in the discipleship narrative), and as part of the secrecy motif that permeates the first half of the Gospel. In the case of the two early novels by Chariton and Xenophon of Ephesus, such secrecy/non-recognition is also frequently developed. Chariton’s heroine, Callirhoe, initially refuses to disclose her full identity, believing that it is better to be what she has become—a slave. Later, having related her story to Dionysius, she then discovers she is pregnant—a secret she must keep from him to save the unborn child. This secret, in turn, invokes various other plot twists. Chaereas, out of love-sick devotion to Callirhoe,

² Mark uses εὐθύς, or the variant εὐθέως, 42 times, or 0.354% of total words; the occurrence in *Ephesiaca* is 23 times, or 0.134% of words; *Callirhoe* has εὐθύς 40 times, or 0.113% of words. By contrast Luke’s usage is 7 times or 0.038% of total words. (These figures assume the inclusion of all instances in Mark, including disputed ones; it also assumes—for word-count purposes—that Mark ends at 16:8). Thus these two novels exhibit an incidence of three times the usage of Luke, and one-third that of Mark. In addition, the phrase καὶ εὐθύς (or καὶ εὐθέως) occurs 26 times in Mark, 5 times in *Ephesiaca*, 7 times in *Callirhoe*, but only twice in Luke (and that probably ‘residual’ from Markan borrowing; in neither case at the start of a sentence).

³ BSHR, 11.

maintains silence even to the point of ascending his cross until his friend Polycharmus discloses the whole story and Chaereas is called to climb down from his cross.

Homer's *Odyssey* provides an older example of this chronotope, and the secrecy/non-recognition motif is evident throughout Odysseus' frequent lying to conceal his identity, and his curbing of personal feats of strength so that his beggar's disguise would not be penetrated by Penelope's suitors.⁴ In much the same way, Jesus as Son of God possesses powers that point to his identity, and therefore require some measure of secrecy to be enjoined upon those who benefit from those powers; otherwise he would become vulnerable to discovery by the Jewish leaders.

Geography is less important (here and in other examples of the adventure chronotope).⁵ However, unlike other examples of the adventure chronotope, where the action could theoretically happen anywhere, Mark uses location as an encoding indicator of social information, as in the case of the reference to Tyre in the encounter with the SyroPhoenician woman, and with the reference to the region of the Gerasenes in the encounter with Legion. In this sense, Mark does not follow the usual pattern of the adventure-chronotope, which is "characterized by a *technical, abstract connection between space and time*, by the *reversibility* of moments in a temporal sequence, and by their *interchangeability* in space."⁶ Yet there is a similarity with the chronotope in that Mark's geography is certainly more theoretical than actual, and the place names have symbolic rather than literal meaning.⁷

⁴ Homer's *Odyssey*, however, does not share the novel genre; even though the chronotope of *The Odyssey* may be similar. Here Bakhtin's use of chronotope appears to relate more to motifs than the larger structuring unit of the genre.

⁵ In *Ephesiaca*, for example, geographical references should not be taken too seriously. For example, in 4.1.3.2-4.1.5.5 there are repeated geographical comments that reveal only fragmentary knowledge: "ἔρχονται τὴν ἐπὶ Πηλουσίου καὶ τῷ ποταμῷ τῷ Νείλῳ πλεύσαντες εἰς Ἑρμούπολιν τῆς Αἰγύπτου καὶ Σχεδίαν, ἐμβαλόντες εἰς διώρυγα τοῦ ποταμοῦ τὴν ὑπὸ Μενελάου γενομένην Ἀλεξάνδρειαν μὲν παρήλθον, ἦλθον δὲ ἐπὶ Μέμφιν τὴν ἱερὰν τῆς Ἰσιδος, κάκειθεν ἐπὶ Μένδην. 4.1.4... Διελθόντες μὲν δὴ Ταῖα ἐπὶ Λεοντῶ ἔρχονται πόλιν καὶ ἄλλας παρελθόντες κόμας οὐκ ὀλίγας, ὧν τὰς πολλὰς ἀφανεῖς, εἰς Κοπτὸν ἔρχονται τῆς Αἰθιοπίας πλησίον. 4.1.5 Ἐνταῦθα ἔγνωσαν ληστεύειν· πολὺ γὰρ πλῆθος ἐμπόρων τὸ διοδεῖον ἦν τῶν τε ἐπ' Αἰθιοπίαν καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ Ἰνδικὴν φοιτῶντων. ἦν δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ τὸ ληστήριον ἀνθρώπων πεντακοσίων. Καταλαβόντες δὲ τῆς Αἰθιοπίας τὰ ἅκρα, καὶ ἄντρα κατασησάμενοι διέγνωσαν τοὺς παριόντας..."

⁶ *FTC*, 100.

⁷ Such as in Jesus' improbable journey to the Decapolis via Tyre and Sidon (Mark 7-8) after encountering the Syro-Phoenician woman.

Callirhoe is a straightforward linear narrative, which dramatically presents the story with minimal narration. Direct speech is used extensively, to enhance the immediacy of the narrative. Paradox and antithesis are rhetorical devices that are widely used. The strength of Chariton's work is "the gradually emerging, subtle overall picture built up of the actions, reactions and utterances of the characters."⁸ The nature of characterisation in such ancient romances is a fruitful area for comparison with Mark. The main protagonists, who are foregrounded for much of the time, are usually surrounded by many others—including crowds—who provide a transient but often important rôle. The crowds serve as a background against which the protagonists stand out in relief. For example, in *Callirhoe*, Chaereas and Callirhoe meet and fall in love while the crowd is worshipping Aphrodite;⁹ they undergo adventures before the eyes of the crowd.¹⁰ Similarly, in *Ephesiaca*, the action affecting Anthia and Habrocomes sometimes takes place before the crowd.¹¹ Mark has the crowd acting as background on many occasions (Mark 2:4; 3:9, 20; 4:36; 5:21, 24, 27, 31; 7:17, 33; 8:1; 9:14, 17, 25; 10:46; 11:32; 12:12, 41; 14:43; 15:15). The key protagonists in Mark, including the Markan Jesus, do engage in dialogic interaction with the crowd on other occasions, however (2:13, 3:32; 4:1; 5:30; 6:34, 45; 7:14; 8:2, 6, 34; 9:15; 11:18; 12:37; 15:8, 11).¹²

Stylistically, *Ephesiaca* and Mark's Gospel bear significant similarities. Mark's Gospel has often been criticised for the roughness of its Greek, and for its use of stereotypical devices. Scholars have also often pointed out that the style of *Ephesiaca* is crude, clumsy, simplistic, and cliché-ridden; and that Xenophon of Ephesus has depicted his characters melodramatically. But such characteristics are typical of folktales, and comparisons should be made accordingly in light of the essential orality of the work, rather than judging it against the conventions of more complex literary aesthetics.¹³ Vocabulary, plot development, rhetorical strategies and characterisation are more conventionalised, simpler and

⁸ Hägg, *Novel*, 8.

⁹ *Callirhoe* 1.1.

¹⁰ *Callirhoe* 1.5.3, 3.2.14, 3.3.2, 3.4.5, 4.1.7, 5.1.8, 5.3.6, 5.5.8, 6.1.1, 6.2.1, 8.6.2.

¹¹ *Ephesiaca* 1.2, 1.3, 1.12, 5.13.

¹² Separating the two instances is sometimes difficult: as a rule, interaction is considered to be more than a description of a character's motives for action; thus Pilate's desire to please the crowd is categorised here as a background representation of the crowd.

¹³ Reardon, *Novels*, 126.

more homogenised than is the pattern of the cultivated and self-conscious writings of the privileged class, as Tolbert rightly notes.¹⁴

The issue of the dating of *Ephesiaca* and *Callirhoe* is a significant one: there is a significant variation in agreed limits for the dating of both works, and this divergence is significantly greater than opinion concerning Mark. For the purposes of this study, it will be assumed that *Callirhoe* was written mid-first century and *Ephesiaca* slightly later—possibly as late as mid-second century.¹⁵ Although Mark shares similar stylistic characteristics with *Ephesiaca*, *Callirhoe* contains folkloric elements that have points of direct comparison in Mark. Some would see the comparative dating as important for possible literary dependence or interdependence, whether Mark may have been dependent on *Callirhoe* or the reverse. For example, there are some points—such as the empty tomb scene in *Callirhoe*—where the similarities are remarkable. As mentioned above, the points of comparison between the Markan ending at Mark 16:4–8 and *Callirhoe* (3.3.1–3.3.2) are significant: the burial stones are removed and the entrance open when Chaereas arrives at the tomb; his reaction of perplexity is described; and an ἄγγελος reports news.¹⁶

Certainly the vocabulary used is different even in such closely similar scenes; however, this does not preclude the possibility of dependence at an oral level, which takes a subsequent written form. The various possibilities would certainly occupy the consideration of historical-critical

¹⁴ Tolbert, *Sowing*, 78–79:

While the Gospel of Mark and the early examples of the ancient novel obviously do not share the same story line, their rhetorical, stylistic, and linguistic similarities are conspicuous. Both are synthetic, conventional narratives that combine historiographic form with epic and dramatic substance. Episodic plots, central turning points, final recognition sequences, dialogic scenes with narrative frames, sparing but crucial use of monologue, repetition, narrative summaries, foreshadowing, and monolithic, illustrative characters are some of the elements the Gospel and ancient novels have in common—and all of these features are presented in a simple, crude, conventionalized style suitable to popular dissemination across a broad spectrum of society. Indeed, if the Gospel of Mark is an example of Hellenistic popular literature, we have uncovered a major reason for its opacity and apparent muddle for modern readers. Popular literature is far more dependent than elite literature on conventions and formulas; it is therefore far less understandable outside its own cultural conventions than the more highly individualized literature of the cultivated tradition.

¹⁵ See previously footnoted discussion in chapter one above, footnote 110.

¹⁶ *Callirhoe* 3.3.1–3.3.2 “παραγνόμενος δὲ εὔρε τὸς λίθους κεκνημένους καὶ φανεράν τὴν εἴσοδον. ὁ μὲν οὖν ἰδὼν ἐξεπλάγη καὶ ὑπὸ δεινῆς ἀπορίας κατείχετο τοῦ γεγονότος χάριν· ἄγγελος δὲ Φῆμη ταχεῖα Συρακοσίοις ἐμήνυσε τὸ παράδοξον.” Roughly translated, this would read: “On arrival, he found the stones had been moved and the entrance was open. So then, having seen this, he was amazed and filled with terrible perplexity as a result. A messenger quickly made known the incredible report to the Syracusians.”

analysis: if *Callirhoe* predated Mark, does the Markan ending draw on *Callirhoe* in a folkloric pericope, which ends abruptly and somewhat awkwardly? Or does *Callirhoe* show elements of dependence on oral Christian tradition concerning Jesus, which are then changed and incorporated into his romance? If Mark pre-dates *Callirhoe*, has Chariton drawn on Mark directly, while changing the vocabulary and context? Or on some form of *Ur-Markus*, or some oral traditions?

Mark's genre-memory may include such popular works, but there are also several other points where the first section of Mark does not precisely follow the contours of the adventure chronotope. Apart from the obvious element of specific content—the Gospel is clearly not dealing with romantic love between two people—there are more significant differences. Individuals in the adventure chronotope remain passive and unchanging:¹⁷ their

static, immutable nature... and their abstract ideality preclude any emergence or development... The tested hero is... ready-made and determined. The tests (suffering, temptation, doubt) do not become formative experience for him, they do not change him, and in that very immutability of the hero lies [the key characteristic of this chronotope.]¹⁸

While there may be some measure of safety in a theological understanding of Jesus as immutable, Mark's Gospel often seems to imply a measure of change and even development in the character of the Markan Jesus, as will be seen.

Central to the adventures in this chronotope is the concept of trials faced by the hero and heroine—usually in terms of their chastity and faithfulness. However, other characteristics are also tested such as the character's nobility, strength, courage and fearlessness. Clearly the Markan Jesus is not part of a hero/heroine pair, so chastity and faithfulness are irrelevant here. But the concept of testing does permeate these chapters: commencing with the wilderness temptation (Mark 1:12–13); through testing of his (spiritual) strength in the exorcisms (Mark 1:21–28, 3:11–12, 5:1–20); testing his fearlessness in encountering the priests and other aspects of the dominant hegemony (Mark 2:1–11, 23–28; 3:1–6, 3:22–30); testing his courage in refuting kinship ties in favour of (fictive) kinship ties (Mark 3:31–35); in opposing natural forces (Mark

¹⁷ *FTC*, 100. (See also *BSHR*, 11–12, although in this essay, Bakhtin refers to these features as characteristic of the 'genre' of the travel novel.)

¹⁸ *BSHR*, 12–13.

4:35–41, 6:45–52); in responding to the death of the Baptizer (Mark 6:14–29) and his own impending death (Mark 8:31–38); and testing the nobility (superiority) of his character in the healing encounters and the feeding miracles. It is the character of adventure time—with its focus on the deviations from the 'normal' historical and biographical course—that makes it more suited to an understanding of Mark 1–8 than does the character of biographical time with its emphasis on the typical aspects of the course of life: birth, childhood, marriage, death and so forth.¹⁹

Comic Carnival and the Worst Kept Secret

If the first structuring 'axis' for this section of Mark is the adventure chronotope, then the complementary axis is comic carnival. Several characteristics of carnival become significant for this section. If works such as *Ephesiaca* are important in the first structuring matrix as examples of the adventure-chronotope, they are no less important in this second matrix in relation to carnival. Bakhtin considered that the

images and episodes from the *Ephesian Tales* of Xenophon of Ephesus, for example, have the distinct scent of the menippea about them. The dregs of society are represented in the spirit of slum naturalism: prisons, slaves, thieves, fishermen, and so forth.²⁰

While prisons, slaves and thieves are less apparent in the Gospel, the 'dregs of society' are certainly well represented. In this section, the three incidents each centre around people who are 'outside' and unclean, and an important aspect of carnival is apparent: the creation of a zone of free and familiar contact among people who would otherwise be separated by hierarchical social boundaries.²¹ In this section, there are several healings that clearly transgress such boundaries: the healing of the demonised and of lepers; healing of the woman with the haemorrhage; restoring Jairus' daughter to life having entered the ruler's house; and especially the healing of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter.

Another category of carnival is the development of 'eccentric' inter-relationships between individuals—with the eccentricity being a level of inappropriateness viewed from the perspective of normal (non-carnival)

¹⁹ See also *BHSR*, 14–17.

²⁰ *PDP*, 121.

²¹ *PDP*, 123.

human relationships.²² Nowhere is this more evident than in the establishment by the Markan Jesus of a fictive kinship group to replace his normal family (Mark 3:31–35), especially after their concern that he is eccentric or mad (Mark 3:21). Thus, it is possible for inappropriate people such as tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:15–16) to become part of Jesus' kinship group if they do the will of God (Mark 3:35). The concept of *carnivalistic mésalliances*—the uniting of once-distanced values, thoughts and phenomena, such as the sacred and the profane, the great and the insignificant—is another carnival category evident in this section.²³ The account of the drawing together of a disparate group of followers (Mark 3:13–19) is an example of this carnivalesque element, but this is overshadowed by the discussion (Mark 7:1–23) concerning clean and unclean.

The fourth category of *profanation*—that is, carnivalistic blasphemies, debasings and bringings down to earth—are less apparent in this section.²⁴ An exception may be Jesus' accusation of blasphemy (Mark 3:28–30) by the Jewish leaders—the very people whose legalism supposedly safeguards against blasphemy, and who had themselves accused Jesus of blasphemy earlier (Mark 2:7)! Perhaps, also, when Jesus' family consider him mad, this might be a carnivalesque blasphemy (Mark 3:21); operating particularly at the level of the hearing-reader, who knows the true identity of Jesus, this becomes a profanation of Jesus by his family.

In this early section of Mark, two elements require further exploration in light of these twin structuring matrices, and especially in terms of comic carnival. The first is that it is here that

the classical Christian dialogic syncrises [begin to be] worked out: that of the tempted (Christ...) with the tempter, the believer with the non-believer, the righteous man with the sinner, ... the follower of Christ with the Pharisee...²⁵

The second is that of the secrecy motif in Mark, which has long been a matter for scholarly debate. To the extent that this motif is introduced and developed in the early section of the Gospel, and reaches a climax (although it could be argued *not* a conclusion) at the cross, it could be said to be a central theme of the Gospel. Its rhetorical effect on the

²² *PDP*, 123.

²³ *PDP*, 123.

²⁴ *PDP*, 123.

²⁵ *PDP*, 135.

hearing-reader can be understood from the perspective of the different levels of dialogue: first-level dialogue among characters—especially between Jesus and other characters—indicates varying levels of comprehension of the true nature of his identity. At second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader is drawn to the dialogic threshold to respond to the clear indications from the prefatory title onwards concerning Jesus' true identity. (And yet, it becomes possible that there are levels of opacity in the text that prevent even the hearing-reader from obtaining full comprehension!) At third-level dialogue, secrecy motifs are frequent themes in other literature—from Homer's *Odyssey* to the early Graeco-Roman romances. In *Callirhoe*, the main characters sometimes choose to keep their true identity secret. For example, in Book 2 of *Callirhoe*, Dionysius does not know Callirhoe's name, and when he finally learns it from her, she refuses to tell her true identity. (*Callirhoe* 2.5.6).

It is comic carnival, however, that offers fresh perspective on the secrecy motif in Mark. Unlike in other writings, attempts to maintain the secret of Jesus' identity repeatedly fail. There is a double comic irony at work here: the first irony concerns the possibility that Jesus-as-Son-of-God should hide behind a (carnival) mask. The second irony is that, in allowing the mask to slip even a little, his identity is proclaimed widely, yet that understanding of his identity is never accurate. The Markan Jesus is therefore forced to clutch the mask ever more tightly, even as others are seeking to unmask him. The (almost) final unmasking, which occurs in the Passion narrative, has Jesus voluntarily remove the mask (Mark 14:62) only to have it replaced with another mask (Mark 15:2): even as he reveals his identity, the true nature of that identity remains hidden, and he is crucified because his identity has been misunderstood (Mark 15:26). At this point, however, that unmasking process is involuntary for Jesus. He is the archetypal carnival clown.

Three passages will suffice to demonstrate the chronotopic and carnivalesque dimensions evident in this section of the gospel: the cleansing of the leper (Mark 1:40–45), the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1–20), and the encounter with the SyroPhoenecian woman (Mark 7:24–30). In each case, there are significant barriers crossed as the main characters—including the Markan Jesus—find themselves at a dialogic threshold that will result in individual change.²⁶

²⁶ Bakhtin notes that “participants in the act stand *on the threshold* (on the threshold of life and death, falsehood and truth, sanity and insanity). And they are presented here as

*Bakhtin & the Cleansed Leper (Mark 1:40–45)**Dialogue with the text*²⁷

A necessary preliminary to applying Bakhtinian categories is an examination of the textual variants in the passage, since the chosen reading will affect dialogical and carnivalesque aspects of the passage. Mark 1:40 includes the phrase καὶ γονυπετῶν, or even καὶ γονυπετῶν αὐτόν. While the textual evidence is uncertain, the possibility of a reference to the leper kneeling is supported by the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke. At first-level dialogue, the inclusion of καὶ γονυπετῶν may support παρακαλῶν, as this would suggest the act of imploring aid. At second-level dialogue, however, the hearing-reader may be invited to recognise γονυπετέω as an expression of reverence and honour: the leper (as ‘outsider’) instinctively recognises the true identity of Jesus.

Mark 1:41 has possible textual variants in σπλαγχνισθεῖς or ὀργισθεῖς. The harder reading would appear to be ὀργισθεῖς, but given that it might have been suggested by ἐμβριμησάμενος (Mark 1:43) or by confusion between similar words in Aramaic, σπλαγχνισθεῖς seems the better textual choice.²⁸ At the dialogical level, σπλαγχνισθεῖς is also clearly the better choice. Jesus is literally ‘having his guts torn apart’, or is ‘moved as to his bowels with pity’. That the bowels were considered the seat of love and pity is a partial hint here: there may be a carnivalesque connection—albeit at a distance—with the defecation series and the

voices, ringing out, speaking out ‘before earth and heaven.’” (*PDP*, 147). The characters in these three passages could well be said to stand on just such thresholds!

²⁷ The choice of the term ‘dialogue with the text’ rather than ‘establishing the text’ or ‘textual criticism’ is deliberate, since from a Bakhtinian perspective it is not possible to ‘fix’ or finalise it; rather the process of dialogue with the textual apparatus can involve challenging the layers of ‘smoothing’ in Mark so that it is possible to access a level of orality—or at least a ‘primitive’ text—so that primary speech-genres, and therefore the earliest ‘voices,’ may be heard.

²⁸ See Bruce M. Metzger, (*A textual commentary of the Greek New Testament*, Stuttgart: UBS, 1975, 76–77); but contra Guelich, (*Mark*, 74); Myers, (*Binding the strong man*, 153); Ben Witherington III, (*The Gospel of Mark: a socio-rhetorical commentary*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, 103); James R. Edwards, (*The Gospel according to Mark*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, 70); Francis J. Moloney (*The Gospel of Mark: a commentary*, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002, 58). But R.H. Gundry, (*Mark: A commentary on his apology for the cross*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993, 103); John Paul Heil, (*The Gospel of Mark as model for action: a reader-response commentary*, New York: Paulist Press, 1992, 56); John Painter (*Mark’s Gospel: worlds in conflict*, London: Routledge, 1997, 49); and John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, (*The Gospel of Mark*, Sacra Pagina series vol. 2, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002, 89); each prefer σπλαγχνισθεῖς.

clean/unclean discussion at Mark 7:21–22.²⁹ This understanding of the Markan usage of *σπαραγγνίζομαι* is consistent throughout the Gospel: of the four times where it is used, three are indicators of the emotional state of the Markan Jesus (Mark 1:41, 6:34, 8:2), and the other occurrence concerns the entreaty of the boy's father to Jesus (Mark 9:22). Apart from the (Jewish) feeding in the wilderness (= unclean place) at Mark 6:34, in which the enigmatic rationale for Jesus' response is because they were sheep without a shepherd, the other three references concern people that could be considered unclean: the leper (Mark 1:41), the presumably Gentile crowd (Mark 8:2), and the boy with an unclean spirit (Mark 9:22).³⁰

Character-zones

Having considered the textual issues, it becomes necessary to examine the various characters in terms of the different levels of dialogue, and also the ways in which the portrayals of the characters have been affected by carnivalesque elements. The presence of various speech-utterances³¹ clearly indicates the interindividual nature of the characters, and therefore any separation under headings becomes an arbitrary and 'messy' convenience; references to different character-zones will inevitably cross such headings.

²⁹ See further discussion under "Character-zones".

³⁰ The intertextual indicators of the sheep-without-a-shepherd metaphor (Numbers 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; 2 Chronicles 18:16; Judith 11:19; Ezekiel 34:5, 8) suggest a polemic against the leaders with whom Jesus will engage in the controversy concerning clean/unclean. Jesus, the new David (cf. Ezekiel 34:23), feeds the sheep in the wilderness having been 'moved as to his bowels with pity' for the crowd because their leaders, who claimed to be 'clean', had failed to be shepherds of the sheep.

³¹ See also John G. Cook, *The structure and persuasive power of Mark: a linguistic approach*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995. Cook terms these 'speech-acts,' but in keeping with Bakhtin's own preference, they will be termed 'speech-utterances' here; Bakhtin notes that "[s]peech is always cast in the form of an utterance... [and the] boundaries of each concrete utterance as a unit of speech communication are determined by a *change of speaking subjects*, that is, a change of speakers. Any utterance—from a short (single-word) rejoinder in everyday dialogue to the large novel...—[has] its beginning... preceded by the utterances of others, and its end... followed by the responsive utterances of others (or, although it may be silent, others' active responsive understanding)." (*PSG*, 71, italics original).

Jesus and the leper

The pericope commences with a καί-parataxis typical of the Markan style. There is little apparent connection evident with what has immediately preceded it; any connection is at the symbolic story level rather than at the grammatical level. While the pericope could be considered to operate independently, it does, however, demand some context within a larger unit. For example, Jesus remains un-named throughout the pericope, thereby requiring it to be part of a larger section; if it stood alone, he would be effectively unidentified. But this may also act as a carnivalesque mask—the absence of any identification other than the third-person pronoun.

Four speech-utterances occur in this passage, and together with the dialogue markers (e.g. λέγων) are indicative of the degree of (first-level) dialogue taking place between the characters: at 1:40—παρακαλῶν... θέλης... καθαρῖσαι, the leper begs for cleansing (a directive request); at 1:41—θέλω, καθαρῖσθῃτι, Jesus commands his cleansing (expressive and declarative); at 1:44—Ὅρα... ὕπαγε, Jesus commands the man (a command which fails); and at 1:45—κηρύσσειν, the leper proclaims about Jesus.³²

From these indicators, a dialogical threshold is apparent in the text: this is the first instance of a leper presenting for healing, and his primary threshold is that of life/death, since he is condemned to a living death unless he can be cleansed.³³ The leper's challenge Ἐὰν θέλης δύνασαι μὴ καθαρῖσαι (Mark 1:40) indicates that the leper has crossed a faith-threshold himself by declaring his belief that Jesus has the power and authority *if he wants to*, for the leper to be healed.³⁴ Indeed, the leper has come to Jesus, a non-priest, despite this being a violation of the purity code. He has already crossed purity boundaries, as well as the dialogical threshold of belief/unbelief. The leper's question draws *Jesus* to a threshold in which he must determine, given that he has the power to cure a social outcast, whether he is willing to do so. Accordingly, the leper is inviting Jesus to the threshold, while still giving Jesus the

³² Cook, *Structure & persuasive power*, 178.

³³ So Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 91.

³⁴ Marcus (*Mark*, 209) qualifies this claim by arguing that it is derived power, and notes the leper's use of δύνασαι, and Jesus' use of the passive form of the command καθαρῖσθῃτι (in 1:41) as indicative that Jesus' power is derived. However, this could only be a 'second-level dialogue' issue as otherwise it would be implying that the leper understood something of Jesus' divine nature—something which would be unusual for all Markan characters except those that are supernatural.

choice to refuse. (It is more likely that the man was requesting healing from Jesus, rather than that Jesus would provide an official recognition of his cleanness—something that the priests may have been reluctant to offer.) Drawn to this dialogical threshold, Jesus is ‘moved as to his bowels with pity’ for the man, and reverses the effect of his uncleanness. Purity boundaries are crossed by Jesus in the healing, with Jesus’ intentional touch (ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἥψατο Mark 1:41) forming an essential part of the process.

At third-level dialogue, it should be noted that this reference to Jesus touching the leper is the first account of the use of ἅπτω in Mark. The absence of any co-textual reference in previous healings is suggestive, especially since this is the first recorded instance of a *leper* being healed. The choice of the stronger term ἅπτω rather than the more delicate θιγγάνω,³⁵ is suggestive of a carnivalesque element introduced by Mark. Jesus is now shown to be *deliberately* crossing bodily boundaries which correspond to clean/unclean distinctions.³⁶ Inter-textual references in *Callirhoe* focus also on ἅπτω on several occasions, rather than θιγγάνω. Some of these references are not relevant here, as they relate to touching inanimate objects,³⁷ but other usage is more interesting at ‘third-level’ dialogue:

³⁵ Which, though used by writers of tragedies such as Sophocles (13 times) and Euripides (almost 50 times), and by Plutarch (approx 70 times), is never used in the Gospels; and Luke’s usage of ψηλαφάω (Luke 24:39) is restricted to the invitation to Thomas to touch the wounds of the resurrected. However, while θιγγάνω is also never used in *Callirhoe*, ἅπτω is used rarely (6 times). While *Ephesiaca* does not use θιγγάνω, it only has ἅπτω once, and then only to describe flames touching Habrocomes’ body: “Καὶ ἦν μὲν ἅπαντα παρεσκευασμένα, καὶ ἡ πυρὰ παρὰ τὰς ἐκβολὰς τοῦ Νείλου, καὶ ἐπετίθετο μὲν ὁ Ἀβροκόμης καὶ τὸ πῦρ ὑπετέθειτο, ἄρτι δὲ τῆς φλογὸς μελλούσης ἅπτεσθαι τοῦ σώματος εὐχέτο πάλιν ὀλίγα, ὅσα ἐδύνατο, σῶσαι αὐτὸν ἐκ τῶν καθεστῶτων κακῶν.” (*Ephesiaca* 4.2.8.6. Roughly translated: “And so everything was prepared, and the pyre placed at the delta (outflowing) of the Nile, and Habrocomes laid on it, and the fire placed underneath. But just as the flames were about to touch his body he again prayed a few words, as much as he was able, to save him from possible harm.”)

³⁶ Other occasions when the same verb is used include three instances in the healing of the woman with the haemorrhage, who was ritually unclean (Mark 5:27, 30, 31); the account of mass healings, in which people sought to touch the fringe of Jesus’ garment—a crossing of bodily boundaries, and possibly of purity boundaries also (Mark 6:56); and the healing of deaf-mute (7:33) which not only crosses bodily and purity barriers but has significant carnivalesque elements which were removed in the other Synoptic Gospels.

³⁷ For example at 1.4.11.2, 1.9.1.3.

σκέπτου δὲ μὴ περὶ σεαυτῆς μόνης, ἀλλὰ καὶ Χαιρέου κινδυνεύοντος ἀπολέσθαι τὸν οἴκτιστον μόρον· οὐ γὰρ ἀνέξεται βασιλεὺς ἐν ἔρωτι παρευδοκιμούμενος. κακέϊνος μὲν ἀπηλλάγη, τὸ δὲ τελευταῖον τῆς ὁμιλίας ἦψατο Καλλιρόης.³⁸

Dionysius, for the sake of love, is prepared to cross the boundary between earth and heaven by climbing to heaven and touching Zeus: “ἔτοιμος γὰρ ὁμνύναι, εἰ δυνατόν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀναβάς καὶ ἀψάμενος αὐτοῦ τοῦ Διός.” (*Callirhoe* 3.2.5) The touch is quite violent in *Callirhoe* 4.2.10, where someone laid hands on Polycharmus: “καὶ τις ἤδη τοῦ σώματος ἀπτόμενος αὐτοῦ “λέγε” φησὶ “τοῦνομα τῆς γυναικός, ἣν αἰτίαν ὁμολόγησας εἶναι σοι τῶν κακῶν.” “Καλλιρόην” εἶπεν ὁ Πολύχαρμος.” However, it is quite sensual in *Callirhoe* 5.9.4 where Callirhoe touches her eyes wondering if she had seen Chaereas: “ὥς οὖν κατεκλίθη, καὶ εἶασαν αὐτὴν ἡσυχάζειν, ἀψαμένη τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν.” Each of these references tend to stress the *deliberate* nature of touch where ἄπτω is used, and this corresponds well with the Markan usage.

The deliberate choice to touch the leper is accompanied by the command to be healed. At first-level dialogue, the use of the ‘divine passive’³⁹ in this command, and reflected in the request from the leper, is unlikely to be involving an understanding on the part of the leper; however, at second-level dialogue it becomes part of the author’s dialogue with the hearing-reader concerning the identity of Jesus. The hearing-reader would expect to find the active voice form of the verb: the occurrence of the passive becomes an alert to the hearing-reader, and a dialogic threshold is established in which the hearing-reader must again dialogue with the content of the prefatory title of the Gospel, and consider the question of Jesus’ identity.

The significance of the emotions attributed to the Markan Jesus: *σπλαγχνισθεῖς*⁴⁰ (‘moved as to his bowels with pity’) and *ἐμβριμ-*

³⁸ *Callirhoe* 6.7.13.3–6.7.13.5 (Roughly translated:) “‘But do not be concerned only about yourself, but also Chaereas, who is in danger of perishing miserably; for the King will not endure being outdone in love.’ With that, he departed, and his final words touched Callirhoe companionably (palpably?).”

³⁹ As previously indicated (see note 31), Marcus notes the use of the passive form to indicate power derived from God.

⁴⁰ The word is eliminated in the parallel passages in Matt 8:3 and Lk 5:13. Other occurrences are at Mark 6:34, and its parallel passage in Matt 9:36 (and doubled at Matt 14:14); Mark 8:2 and its parallel in Matt 15:32; Mark 9:22 is not paralleled in the other Synoptic versions of the pericope; intriguingly, Luke’s only usage of the word occurs in three passages that have no parallels in Mark or Matt—namely, Luke 7:13, 10:33, 15:20.

ησόμενος⁴¹ ('snorting with indignation') has been a source of speculation, with translators and interpreters usually opting to 'soften' the effect by indicating that Jesus was moved with compassion or pity, and sternly warned the leper.⁴² The impact of such emotions on the hearing-reader is not as frequently considered by interpreters; second-level dialogue must involve a response by the hearing-reader to the character *including* the emotions as indicated by the author.⁴³ However, the strength of emotion indicated may relate to the fact that demands upon Jesus for healing have once again overshadowed the success (or failure) of his kingdom proclamation. Miller and Miller suggest that Jesus is irritated because he has succumbed to the 'temptation' to be distracted from proclamation of the Kingdom by the demands for the miraculous.⁴⁴ It may also be anticipatory, in the sense that it implies that the Markan Jesus knows that this healing will increase his fame and therefore circumscribe his capacity to move freely about proclaiming repentance. Lamarche even raises the possibility that Jesus' anger (and his subsequent throwing-out of the leper)⁴⁵ may relate to the presentation of Jesus as a faithful observer of the Law.⁴⁶

Against this, van Iersel maintains that the leper does not get healed in the village but somewhere in the open—effectively outside.⁴⁷ But this would seem unlikely, given the intensity of emotion attributed to Jesus (ἐμβριμησόμενος), and the reference to throwing the leper out (ἐξέβαλεν). Guelich raises the possibility that this pericope may be a

⁴¹ The word finds no parallel in Matt or Luke. Interestingly, Matt 9:30 includes the term when it is not found in parallel passages in Mark 10:52 or Lk 18:42.

⁴² However Guelich (*Mark*, 72) rightly notes the connection in classical Greek with expressions of indignation; Marcus (*Mark*, 206) maintains that the nuance of anger should not be denied in this passage.

⁴³ Bakhtin maintains that "[w]ith respect to a person, love, hatred, pity, tenderness and emotions in general are always dialogic in some measure" *PT*, 113.

⁴⁴ Miller, *Mark as midrash*, 83–84.

⁴⁵ Howard C. Kee, (*The community of the new age: studies in Mark's Gospel*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977, 35) maintains it was the demon associated with the leprosy, rather than the leper, that was thrown out; although this would seem less likely given that this action follows the healing.

⁴⁶ P. Lamarche, (*Évangile de Marc* (Études Bibliques 33), Paris: J. Gabalda, 1996, 88) "On peut comprendre que Jésus s'indigne de ce que le lépreux, certainement entré dans un village et sans doute dans une maison, ait ainsi désobéi à la Loi; en effet en 1,43 Jésus le met dehors et en 1,45 le lépreux guéri... Cependant cette obéissance à la Loi, liée au désir chez Jésus de guérir ce malade excommunié, amène dans le text des oppositions, des heurts, des contradictions."

⁴⁷ Bas M.F. Van Iersel, *Mark: a reader-response commentary*, JSNT Supp 164, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, 142.

conflation of more than one healing, given that ἐμβριμησάμενος and ἐξέβαλεν would function naturally in the setting of an exorcism.⁴⁸ There would seem to be other possibilities however. Jesus' violent action in throwing out the man may be, in part, a reflex of the intensity of emotion. The addition of εὐθύς in such close proximity to these verbs has been claimed by Miller and Miller to support their (midrashic) interpretation of the passage: that the double occurrence of εὐθύς indicates that Jesus is responding to temptation.⁴⁹ More likely, however, is the possibility that the intense emotion of the Markan Jesus relates to the purity system against which he demands that the man testify by means of the purification offering.⁵⁰ This is the first time that the hearing-reader encounters Jesus clashing with the purity system. If Jesus has been concerned to keep the Mosaic Law, the arrival of the leper is a challenge to his orthodoxy, and to his own ritual purity. Thus, the Markan Jesus may be shown to be indignant with the man for entering the village, but in the ensuing dialogue Jesus is challenged concerning his willingness to heal the man. In a sense, the Markan Jesus has come to a threshold. While Mark gives few (if any) direct indications of the psychology of his characters, the effect of the narrative is to present Jesus as having changed (grown?) in his relationship to the purity system as a result of this encounter with the leper. It is not necessary, however, to speculate on the emotional state of the Markan Jesus, whether anger or irritation: at the dialogical level there is clearly a difference between Jesus and the leper such that Jesus has not encountered a 'supporting chorus'⁵¹ for his utterance; that is, Jesus does not have others around agreeing with his position—whatever that may be. Bakhtin argues that

when an individual assumes disagreement in his interlocutor or at least is unsure or doubtful of the agreement, he [sic] puts another intonation

⁴⁸ Guelich, *Mark*, 73. See also Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 89–90.

⁴⁹ Miller, *Midrash*, 83.

⁵⁰ Morna Hooker, (*The Gospel according to St Mark*, London: A. & C. Black, 1991, 80) and Marcus (*Mark*, 209) indicate Jesus' anger is directed against the demonic forces responsible for the leprosy, seeing this healing having close parallels with the exorcism earlier in 1:21–26. Yet no similar examples of anger are recorded in the previous exorcism, nor yet in that of the lad in 9:14–27 where a similar question concerning Jesus' willingness to assist is raised by the father of the lad.

⁵¹ This term (taken from *DLDP*, 14) is part of a lengthy discussion concerning intonation, including the comment that "if there [is not]...a 'supporting chorus', the intonation would [go]...in another direction, and become more complex: perhaps with tones of challenge or vexation".

on his [sic] words and besides would usually construct... [the] utterance otherwise.⁵²

Thus Jesus' intonation is shaped by the absence of a 'supporting chorus' and communicates as vexation.

The leper is unclean. His daring approach to Jesus has signalled a heightened level of suspense in the narrative. Cure from leprosy is comparable in Jewish thinking to raising from the dead, since both were in the same category of uncleanness.⁵³ Technically, in that he has been isolated to the margins of the town, the leper has been (in a carnival sense) 'defecated and flushed' from the (clean) community. This 'defecation' is doubly indicated if, together with the original expulsion, the possibility exists that the man had just come from the priests to Jesus, after they had rejected his petition to declare him clean. This would require the reference at 1:44 concerning the offering commanded by Moses εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς to be a testimony *against* them rather than *to* them,⁵⁴ although it also might appear to reinforce ὀργισθεῖς, referring to the anger of Jesus against the purity system. However, if the initial dialogical response of the Markan Jesus is σπλαγχνισθεῖς and the indication of desire to heal, then ἐμβριμσάμενος may be a subsequent dialogical development, after the immediacy of the healing, and associated with the dismissal of the man.⁵⁵

The use of ἐξέβαλεν for Jesus' subsequent action toward the leper could indeed connote a form of exorcism⁵⁶ because of the association of leprosy with evil-spirits; but since it is the man rather than the disease that is thrown out, there may be other reasons behind the action. The action appears to be ironic: literally, Jesus throws him out. But out of

⁵² *DLD*, 14.

⁵³ See the Levitical prescriptions in Lev 13–14, especially Lev 13:45–46.

⁵⁴ See also Mark 6:11, 13:9; these are the three instances where the phrase occurs, and each occurs before a hostile audience. The other instances of μαρτυρία, μάρτυς, μαρτυρέω, and their derivatives also occur in situations that are hostile to Jesus (Mark 14:55, 56, 59, 63). Thus 'testimony against' would seem a preferable understanding of the text. So also Edward Broadhead, *Mark*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, 29; but contra Marcus, *Mark*, 207, who claims that this is prior to controversies that would occur between Jesus and the Jewish leadership.

⁵⁵ Moloney (*Mark*, 59) considers this to be a "climactic episode... [in which] Jesus shows his passionate commitment to the wholeness and holiness of those who are called to enter the Kingdom of God."

⁵⁶ See Hooker, *St Mark*, 80; also William L. Lane, *The gospel according to Mark*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974, 86); Marcus, *Mark*, 209; and Broadhead *Mark*, 29. But Vincent Taylor (*The Gospel according to St Mark*, London: Macmillan, 2nd edn, 1966, 189) opposes this view, and considers it to indicate that Jesus drove *the man* out.

where? The leper is already ‘outside’ in more ways than one. He has already been expelled/defecated by the priests for being a leper. Now Jesus, who has effectively declared clean what was unclean, is expelling him again!

Malina claims that Jesus’ withdrawal (Mark 1:45) is occasioned by the fact that he is now considered unclean in the city because of his contact with the leper, and the latter’s proclamation of that fact.⁵⁷ Equally possible, however, is that Jesus’ withdrawal is part of a carnivalesque motif: Jesus as carnival clown withdraws partly to ‘readjust the mask’ since the leper has been involved in unmasking him. As well, Jesus and the leper have now ‘switched clothes’: Mark shows Jesus as no more able to enter towns freely than was the experience of the leper at the commencement of this episode. While the leper is now cleansed and able to return to the purity system, Jesus has placed himself at odds with that system: the move from ‘outside’ to ‘inside’ by the leper (and ‘outside’ again, since he has been thrown out by Jesus?) has its complement in Jesus’ move from ‘inside’ to ‘outside.’ In a sense, Jesus is now himself ‘unclean’—both because he has touched the leper and therefore defiled himself, and because he has placed himself at odds with the purity system.

Priests

While not ‘present’ in the encounter between Jesus and the leper, the priests are an important character group that is backgrounded here. They play the central role in implementing the Levitical laws concerning the diagnosis of leprosy, and the prescribed purification rituals. They therefore represent the dominant hegemony in relation to the purity system. Their function is not at first-level dialogue (that is, interindividual characters in the threshold exchange) but at second-level dialogue with the hearing-reader.⁵⁸

The dialogue between the Markan Jesus and what the priests represent will persist throughout the clean/unclean dichotomy and beyond. Thus, the priests represent the dominant ideological position that is

⁵⁷ Bruce Malina, *The New Testament world: insights from cultural anthropology*, Atlanta, John Knox, 1981, 122.

⁵⁸ It is interesting to note the probable presence of a rural priestly (Levitical) community to oversee purity codes in Sepphoris (the ‘silent city’ right next to Nazareth that is never mentioned in the New Testament); this may heighten the ‘inside’/‘outside’ dimensions of the story here.

undercut in a carnival sense throughout the eating and defecation series. Here, they are the principal players in the 'defecation' of the leper from the clean community. They also present the alternative choice for Jesus in the threshold encounter with the leper. The hearing-reader is thus persuaded to engage a similar threshold encounter with Jesus.⁵⁹

Once the leper has presented to them and been pronounced clean, the man would thereafter be restored to full legal status in society. Ironically, there is no evidence that he does present to them. Instead, he who had been 'defecated' from society by the priests, and barred from public life by them, is now moving about spreading the news of his healing. The priests—who are nowhere to be seen in this exchange, but whose influence is everywhere—would have little choice but to consider him clean, since otherwise he who was previously 'nowhere' would have rendered 'everywhere' unclean. Thus at second level dialogue, the hearing-reader recognizes the irrelevance of the priests in the clean/unclean distinction that will subsequently develop.

Significance of the dialogical 'voices'

Jesus' 'voice' is clearly more effective than the 'voice' of the priests, who, although not actually present here, are represented in the 'voice' of the Law—which has clearly been unable to help the leper.⁶⁰ It is the leper's 'voice', however, that has challenged Jesus' 'voice' to override that of the priests. His word challenges Jesus to speak the word of healing. Jesus' word arises from compassion, but is a troubled word: it is indignant at the leper for crossing boundaries and therefore forcing Jesus to the threshold, but more indignant that the priests' word has 'defecated' the leper. Jesus' 'voice' responds to the challenging 'voice' of the leper and pronounces healing (and therefore reverses the effect of the defecating word), but is therefore immediately at odds with the

⁵⁹ Heil (in *Mark*, 57) "By empathizing with the leper's personal experience of total healing in the form of liberation from a dreaded demonic disease and restoration to the community, we are persuaded to hope that Jesus can and will extend his unique divine power to heal us, who often suffer similar pain and alienation from our fellow human beings because of the power of evil and sinfulness."

⁶⁰ Along similar lines, Lamarche, (*Evangelie de Marc*, 88–89) notes: "En attendant, ici en insistant sur l'obligation faite au lépreux guéri d'aller se présenter au prêtre, la texte oppose l'efficacité de la parole de Jésus à l'inefficacité de la Loi qui en est réduite à constater qu'un homme est malade ou bien guéri, mais qui est incapable de sauver."

‘voice’ of the priests;⁶¹ hence the stridency of his ‘voice’ in commanding the leper’s ‘voice’ to silence. But Jesus’ word of command is subverted by the leper, whose word threatens to unmask Jesus’ word. The hearing-reader’s ‘voice’—responding to the level of emotion shown in Jesus’ ‘voice’—is thus drawn to the threshold where it must engage the first of several realignments with the author’s ‘voice’ in the ensuing debate concerning issues of clean versus unclean.

Bakhtin and the Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1–20)

Dialogue with the text

The textual variants in this passage are minimal, being restricted largely to the place-name in Mark 5:1. Here, Γερασηνῶν is problematic: although attested by superior textual evidence (the earliest of the Alexandrian and ‘Western’ text-types),⁶² there has been considerable conjecture concerning the geography that Gerasa implies.⁶³ Marcus

⁶¹ Broadhead (*Mark*, 30) perceptively notes the “significant boundary [that] has been crossed. A human declared unclean by the priestly religious code has been restored to medical, social and religious health...In eradicating one boundary another is established: Jesus’ ministry...will draw a solid line of demarcation between himself and the religious leadership of Israel.” C.R. Kazmierski, “Evangelist and leper: a socio-cultural study of Mark 1.40–45,” *NTS* 38, 1992, 37–50, also stresses the boundary breaking quality of Jesus’ ministry to the leper.

⁶² Ⲡ* B D 28 33 525 *al* it vg cop^{sa}. Many would reject the so-called ‘Western’ text as a text-type, and regard D as a maverick manuscript.

⁶³ Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 279), C.E.B. Cranfield (*Mark*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), and Lane (*Mark*, 180) believe that the site is actually Gergesa, a location much closer to the ‘Sea of Galilee’. Guelich offers considerable discussion (*Mark*, 275–277) concerning the location, as does Gundry (*Mark*, 256) who draws the ‘hesitant’ conclusion that it is Gergesa; while others (e.g. van Iersel, *Mark*, 197) note that geographical precision is not a hallmark of the Gospel, and the hearing-readers may also not have had much knowledge of the geographical situation. Myers (*Binding the strong man*, 190–191) sees it as a reference to Gerasa as part of a ‘socio-symbolic space’ with ideological meaning. Marcus (*Mark*, 342) argues that the most poorly attested reading ‘Gergesenes’ is the most plausible geographically—and hence more likely is a scribal substitution. Herman C. Waetjen (*A reordering of power: a socio-political reading of Mark’s Gospel*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, 113), contends that “it is most appropriately interpreted as a world-building myth in which the meaning underlying its figurative language is to be construed rather than its geographical and literary difficulties resolved through a form-critical analysis of its various stages of oral transmission.” (See also John D. Crossan (*In parables: the challenge of the historical Jesus*, New York: Harper & Row, 1973, 15) for further discussion concerning such figurative language.) Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 163) perceptively note that “much of the debate is based on a

helpfully comments that Gerasa “is appropriate symbolically, since the Hebrew root *grš* means ‘to banish’ and is a common term for exorcism.”⁶⁴

Character-zones

Disciples

The disciples do not appear in the scene, since Jesus is the only one described as having got out of the boat. The implication for the hearing-reader of this absence is that the disciples have some difficulties touching Gentile territory, far less confronting the might of the Legion.⁶⁵ The portrayal of Gentile territory in such dramatic form as shown here⁶⁶—epitomized by the characterisation of the demoniac—(together with the dangers experienced by the disciples in the sea-crossing (4:37–39), and also in the subsequent two west-east attempted crossings),⁶⁷ cause the hearing-reader to realize just how difficult it is to cross the barriers between Jew and Gentile! The disciples are thus portrayed negatively by comparison with the demoniac: the latter will correctly identify Jesus (in contrast to the disciples’ question just asked at Mark 4:41); the demoniac, once healed, wants to follow Jesus as a true disciple but is told to return and tell others (a mark of a true follower), which he does (in contrast to the disciples who follow rather imperfectly!)

misguided understanding that Mark’s realism reflects Petrine memoirs or actual events. His realism is a narrative rather than a historical realism.”

⁶⁴ Marcus, *Mark*, 342.

⁶⁵ The multi-layered meaning of this name has been the subject of long-standing debate. Wactjen notes “the occupation of Roman legions who were stationed in or near Gerasa in order to maintain the lucrative trade routes to southern Arabia and India.” (*Reordering*, 116.)

⁶⁶ Broadhead (*Mark*, 52) notes the “[d]ramatic narrative images [that] portray the land of the Gerasenes as evil, insane, unclean, inhospitable.” Wactjen, (*Reordering*, 117) following Rudolph Pesch, (“The Markan version of the healing of the Gerasene demoniac,” *Ecumenical Review*, 21, 1997, 360) notes that the demoniac is “the representation of gentile ‘(dis)order’ and ‘(dis)integration’...[with] many more like him...Their number is ‘legion’.”

⁶⁷ Mark 6:45–52 (‘strong winds’) and Mark 8:14–21 (‘strong words’) illustrate the difficulties encountered in these west-east crossings. Gill (“Beyond the boundaries,” 38) astutely notes that “[t]he journey beyond the boundary is always difficult” on Mark’s theological map.

Jesus

The characterisation of Jesus takes a new turn here: the crossing of physical, social and religious barriers—established as a pattern in Jesus’ earlier ministry—is further developed as Jesus crosses the barriers between Jew and Gentile.⁶⁸ Intriguingly, however, Jesus will not actually cross these barriers until much later: here he arrives in Gentile territory, engages the supernatural powers evident at the border of Gentile territory, and departs (with some alacrity?) when asked to do so. Not until he encounters the Syro-Phoenician woman will the Markan Jesus deal with the issues associated with engaging the mission to the Gentiles.⁶⁹ In this pericope, then, the character of Jesus draws other characters to a dialogic threshold, but he remains essentially unchanged.

Several speech-utterances occur in this passage, and together with the dialogue markers (e.g. the use of λέγω in parallel with more descriptive verbs indicating speech such as κράζω (Mark 5:7) and παρακαλέω (Mark 5:12)) indicate significant (first-level) dialogue taking place between Jesus and the other characters. At Mark 5:6–7 (ὀρκίζω...μή) the demoniac begs Jesus not to torment him (a directive adjuration); at Mark 5:8 (ἔξελθε) Jesus commands the demon to depart (response to the directive); at Mark 5:9 a double speech-utterance (ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν...καὶ λέγει) occurs in which Jesus asks the demon’s name (question), and the demon gives its name (answer); at Mark 5:12 (παρακάλεσαν) the demons make a request concerning the herd of pigs (request) to which Jesus gives (passive) assent; at Mark 5:17 (παρακαλεῖν) the people in the region come to ask Jesus to leave.⁷⁰ The cumulative effect of such first-level dialogue operates strategically to establish a critical second-level dialogue. As this is the first occasion of any (effective) incursion into Gentile territory, it signals to the hearing-reader the importance of this episode in the ministry of the Markan Jesus; and draws the hearing-reader to a threshold.

⁶⁸ Dale and Patricia Miller operate from their assumption here (as previously in Mark) that “a confrontation with the demonic is primarily intended to depict Jesus’ own inner condition, [and thus] his temptation seems to be raging out of control.” (Miller *Midrash*, 157.) The element of temptation is, according to the Millers, indicated by the use of εὐθύς (Mark 5:2). But this seems less likely, not least because ancient literature tends not to reveal the interiority of characters; it also creates theological ambiguities concerning the identity of Jesus.

⁶⁹ Although Moloney (*Mark*, 102) correctly notes that this account is “establishing a beachhead for the coming of the kingdom among the Gentiles.”

⁷⁰ See also Cook, *Structure and persuasive power*, 198.

Third-level dialogue with the exorcism at Capernaum (Mark 1:21–28) is suggestive, especially since the Capernaum exorcism is in Jewish territory, whereas Legion is in a Gentile area.⁷¹ The brevity of the Jewish exorcism account indicates Jesus' desire to maintain secrecy there; the secrecy motif is less apparent when Jesus is on Gentile soil. It is also possible, however, that the Markan Jesus may have found more 'resistant' spirits in Legion, or is more inclined to engage in dialogue with the spirits, although this is less likely. The references to Legion's strength provide echoes of the 'strong man' saying in Mark 3:27. Dialogically, then, Jesus manages to deal with the strong man/Legion, although not without some measure of struggle.

Gerasene demoniac

The terrible condition of the demoniac is dramatically described: he dwells among the tombs (the unclean realm of the dead); he is cut off from human society; and attempts to alleviate his suffering by protecting him from himself are unsuccessful (Mark shows that he is not dangerous to anyone other than himself—note his self-wounding).⁷² His condition is clearly well-known, because he cries out night and day among the tombs and surrounding area.⁷³ The hearing-reader is aroused to a mixture of horror, frustration and sympathy.⁷⁴

At third-level dialogue, the phrase used by Legion at Mark 5:7 is of special interest. Marcus notes that it is an Old Testament idiom with two possible meanings—one questioning the cause of enmity between two characters, and the other questioning what they have in common.⁷⁵ The phrase also finds an intertextual echo in Epictetus' *Dissertationes*

⁷¹ So Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 164.

⁷² Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 279) argues, not entirely successfully, that there is no "special significance in the association of the demonic with the tombs."

⁷³ Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 164) note the correlation of the Markan language with Isaiah 65:3–5, and that "for both Isaiah and Mark spending nights in the mountain tombs is a sign of pagan behaviour." Guelich (*Mark*, 273) provides a helpful summary of the possible midrashic references to Isaiah 65.

⁷⁴ Heil, *Mark*, 119. Marcus (*Mark*, 343) notes Mark's use of the passive forms of *δισπάσθαι* and *συντετριῆθαι* as 'demonic passives' indicative of the loss of autonomy by the man, who is controlled by the evil spirits. The occurrence of passive forms (instead of the expected active voice) of *συντερίβω* elsewhere in the New Testament gives mixed support for this view: both quote Septuagint Scriptures from Isaiah (in Matthew 12:20) and from the Psalms in Revelation 2:27, yet both occurrences have been reworked by the New Testament writers from the original active voice into what could be considered to be 'divine passives' as fulfilment prophecies.

⁷⁵ Marcus, *Mark*, 187. Witherington (*Mark*, 181) notes only its hostile content.

(2.19.19) “τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, ἄνθρωπε; ἀρκεῖ ἐμοὶ τὰ ἐμὰ κακὰ.” It is highly unlikely that Mark would have been influenced by Epictetus’ writings. However, apart from the parallel passage in Luke 8:28, there are intertextual echoes of Mark 5:19 in the question from Jephthah to the Ammonite king (Judges 11:12 Cod. Alexandrinus Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, ὅτι ἤκεις πρὸς με σὺ πολεμῆσαι με ἐν τῇ γῇ μου; or Judges 11:12 Cod. Vaticanus Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, ὅτι ἤλθες πρὸς με τοῦ παρατάξασθαί ἐν τῇ γῇ μου;); the cry of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:18–19 Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, ἄνθρωπε τοῦ θεοῦ;); Elisha’s question to the king of Israel (2 Kings 3:13 Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί; δεῦρο πρὸς τοὺς προφῆτας τοῦ πατρός σου); Neco’s question of Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:21 Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, βασιλεῦ Ἰουδα;); similarly the king of Egypt’s question of Josiah (in the apocryphal 1 Esdras 1:26 Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί ἐστιν, βασιλεῦ τῆς Ἰουδαίας;); and the question by the Johannine Jesus of Mary (John 2:4 Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὐπὼ ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου.) That such a dramatic phrase more characteristic of Hebrew modes of expression than Greek should be found on the lips of this man from Gerasa is intriguing.⁷⁶ It suggests that this confrontation on Gentile soil is meant for Jewish ears also. It would seem likely that both antecedent meanings are represented here: there is enmity between Jesus and the unclean spirits, who also question what he has in common with them.

Once exorcised, the (former) demoniac becomes an ideal model for the hearing-reader: he has been sent by Jesus to proclaim how he was restored to true humanity through Jesus’ liberating power and mercy. He publicly proclaims what Jesus has done for him, and therefore serves as an example to the hearing-reader to share similarly the experience of Jesus’ liberating and humanizing power.⁷⁷

Unclean spirits (the Legion)

A question presents itself: was it the man who threw himself at Jesus’ feet, or was it the demon(s) that threw him there? If the former, then it

⁷⁶ MacDonald’s solution (*Homeric epics*, 65) is to draw a comparison with Circe’s response to Odysseus. MacDonald takes a complete chapter to draw various comparisons between the Markan account and Homer’s *Odyssey*; however, while it is possible that Homer’s works may have been part of the Markan genre-memory, the location of Markan influences among ‘vulgar’ literature seems more in keeping with the overall approach of Mark than more distant comparisons with Homer.

⁷⁷ Painter (*Mark*, 92) notes interestingly, that this episode is unique in Mark in that the former demoniac is the only one that wants to be with Jesus, but finds himself refused.

is merely a case of seeking a favour—in this case, to be healed. But if it is the action of the unclean spirit(s), it involves an acknowledgment of Jesus as a superior. This possibility would seem to be reinforced by the spirits' identification of Jesus as 'Son of the Most High God'.⁷⁸ Because Jesus is higher in the cosmic hierarchy than the spirits, they are seeking self-protection against Jesus' powerful words of exorcism—which Jesus had already begun (Mark 5:8). Thus the unclean spirit raises his 'voice' against Jesus' 'voice': if naming is an attempt to gain power over the other, responding to the question of the (secret) identity of Jesus may be the spirit's attempt to overcome Jesus. Ultimately forced to disclose its own identity to Jesus, the spirit indicates the ambiguous appellation of Legion. The ὄτι clause indicates that there are many—a whole regiment of demons!⁷⁹ By seeking to remain in the Gerasene territory, the unclean spirits create

the suspense of a potential threat to the rest of the populace (5:10)... But the attempt of the legion of unclean spirits to remain in the territory is thwarted as the herd of some two thousand swine suddenly rush down the cliff into the sea and plunge to their total annihilation as they are drowned quite appropriately in the chaotic abyss of the 'sea,' whose destructive and demonic nature was just demonstrated in the previous scene (4:35–41).⁸⁰

There is an intriguing carnival irony here: Jesus engages in purgative action in 'flushing out' the legion of unclean spirits. He will soon be making the point (Mark 7:1–23) that it is what comes out of a person's heart that is unclean, rather than food which goes through a person's body and is 'flushed'; the author makes clear that Jesus is therefore declaring all foods clean. Here, Jesus 'flushes' the unclean spirits by means of animals that are considered prototypical of uncleanness; they

⁷⁸ Witherington (*Mark*, 181) draws this conclusion of recognized superiority, and notes that this latter phrase is "familiar terminology for the chief god of the pagan pantheon."

⁷⁹ J.D.M. Derrett, ("Contributions to the study of the Gerasene demoniac," *JNT* 3, 1979, 5–7) notes the military language in this passage. Myers (*Binding the strong man*, 190–194) notes the political overtones of the exorcism; Marcus (*Mark*, 351) also notes the satire on the Roman presence in the area; contra Hooker (*Mark*, 143), and Witherington (*Mark*, 183), who sees the name 'Legion' as suggesting the largeness of the number rather than the Roman association.

⁸⁰ Heil, *Mark*, 120. Moloney (*Mark*, 104) correctly notes the boldness of the request "presupposing a bargaining position with Jesus... [but] the presence of Jesus will purify... the man of the Legion of demons, and he has purified the 'countryside' (χώρα) of the unclean animals."

become the vehicle by which the unclean spirits are returned to the abyss.⁸¹ The likelihood that the pigs were destined for the tables of the Roman legions in that area reflects carnivalesque satire: Jesus' action in also 'flushing' the pigs is subversive of the dominant social order expressed by the Romans.⁸²

Swineherds and other 'crowd' members

Witnesses to the exorcism, the swineherds broadcast it throughout both the city and the countryside. The crowd comes from everywhere to see what has happened, and they in turn confirm the reality of the exorcism.⁸³ But they are filled with fear (Mark 5:15) because of the power of Jesus to effect what they could not: the restoration of the man to sanity. It is interesting to note that the narrative gives no indication that the swineherds (and the rest of the crowd) were scandalised by their economic loss. The source of their fear appears to relate less to the profit motive than that the Legion has been overcome by one even stronger. While Legion was wildly insane he could be ignored—left unbound among the tombs and tolerated. It was possible to exist alongside Legion. But when the former demoniac has been exorcised, he becomes the proof that another—even stronger—person is among

⁸¹ There may be a folkloric motif of the 'duped demon' evident here, as Donahue and Harrington have noted (*Mark*, 166).

⁸² Contra Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 166) who question whether the Roman presence was necessarily viewed negatively.

⁸³ The crowd is an indeterminate group which can be friendly or hostile, from which people are chosen, and which is the object of evangelisation. Generally, the implied reader is invited to be sympathetic and positive toward the crowd—at least until the Passion. Joong Suk Suh, (*Discipleship and community in the gospel of Mark*, Unpublished doctoral thesis, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1986) maintains that the crowd, rather than the disciples, is representative of the Markan community. His defence of his thesis is unconvincing, however, especially with passages showing the crowd's hostility to Jesus (e.g. Mark 15:8–15). The most telling argument against Suh's position is that although generally the crowd is inclined positively towards Jesus, it is fundamentally without faith in him. The crowd does, however, have a complementary role to that of the disciples as (fallible) followers of Jesus, since Jesus has called the Twelve as a group, and as individuals, from the crowd. He has also called the crowd as a group, showing that the category of follower is an open-ended construct, with overlaps between the crowd and the disciples. Everyone can be a potential follower, although being an *actual* follower is more difficult. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the crowd cannot readily function as an interindividual character at the threshold; instead the crowd functions in a variety of other ways, including as an agent for carnival.

them, and this becomes the basis for fear.⁸⁴ There is irony in the use of παρακαλέω by the crowd (Mark 5:17)—it is the same as used by the demoniac under the influence of the unclean spirits (Mark 5:10) and the unclean spirits themselves (Mark 5:12). The spirits begged to remain (therefore continuing as a potential menace to the region); the crowd beg Jesus to leave, perhaps seeing him as a potential threat to the region, too. (The demoniac will then beg Jesus to let him remain with Jesus (Mark 5:18).)

The swineherds/crowd members serve as negative models for the hearing-reader in this instance. They reject Jesus: they appear more comfortable with the older dehumanizing ways of living (among evil spirits!) than with the liberation/inversion Jesus provides.⁸⁵ The carnival inversion involved with Jesus symbolically overcoming the (Roman) Legion thus appears to be another second-level dialogue; there seems no evidence that the local populace appreciate the nature of Jesus' action, and it is more likely that it is the hearing-reader that is called to acknowledge Jesus' capacity *in light of the identity issue*.

Significance of the dialogical 'voices'

In a sense, the unclean spirit's 'voice' enters into dialogue with the disciples who have only recently asked the question concerning Jesus' identity at Mark 4:41. The power struggle between the demoniac's/evil spirit's 'voice' and Jesus' 'voice' is evident as the former seeks (unsuccessfully) to gain power over the latter. The extent of the struggle between these 'voices' is evident, with Legion described as κράξας φωνῇ μεγάλῃ (Mark 5:7). Jesus' 'voice' exercises power over the Legion; thus he has power to free humans from the tyrannical 'voices' of evil powers and influences, and maintain order in society. In that there is a comic play on 'Legion', Jesus' 'voice' is thus shown to be more powerful than the 'voice' of the Romans.

The hearing-reader's 'voice' concurs with the author's in having noted that Jesus' 'voice' can overcome the most powerful of evil 'voices'. The

⁸⁴ See Donald H. Juel, *The Gospel of Mark*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999, 112; Marcus *Mark*, 346; and contra Waetjen *Mark*, 119; Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark*, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1993, 84; and Guelich, *Mark*, 284.

⁸⁵ Moloney (*Mark*, 105) perceptively observes the irony in this rejection: "As Jesus has driven the unclean from the land in v. 13, they now ask the 'Son of the most high God' to leave their land."

word of the herdsmen/crowd is to reject Jesus' word out of fear, alarm and complacency; the hearing-reader is thus prompted to view them negatively, choosing to align with the liberating word of Jesus rather than accepting the status quo. The exorcised demoniac's 'voice' serves as a model for hearing-readers, they are encouraged similarly to raise their 'voices' to publicly proclaim what Jesus has done for them. Some, no doubt (like the disciples), will linger at the threshold (by the boats) waiting to see the outcome of this provocative incursion into enemy territory.

Bakhtin and the SyroPhoenecian Woman (Mark 7:24–30)

Dialogue with the text

The presence of καὶ Σιδῶνος at Mark 7:24, although attested by a significant number of texts,⁸⁶ appears to be an assimilation to the text of Matthew 15:21 and Mark 7:31. The reference solely to Τύρου, which is attested in representatives of 'Western' and Caesarean text-types,⁸⁷ fits more readily with the narrative since Jesus leaves the region of Tyre to travel through Sidon (Mark 7:31). The presence of Ναί at verse 28 in some manuscripts⁸⁸ was undoubtedly introduced from the parallel passage in Matthew 15:27. Its absence⁸⁹ stresses the 'otherness' of the woman's 'voice'; she does not first agree and then seek to establish her alternate argument. Rather, from the outset of the dialogue she acts in a manner that assumes a greater 'equality' with Jesus than might otherwise be expected.

⁸⁶ Ⲭ A B K X Π f¹ f¹³ 33 700 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 1216 1230 1241 1242 1253 1344 1365 1546 1646 2148 2174 Byz Lect it^{aur,c,fl,q} vg syr^{ph} cop^{sa,bo} goth arm eth geo Diatessaron^{a,p}.

⁸⁷ D L W Δ Θ 28 565 it^{a,b,d,ff2,i,n,r1} syr^{s,pal} Origen Ambrosiaster.

⁸⁸ Ⲭ A B K L X Δ Π f¹ 28 33 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 1216 1230 1241 1242 1253 1344 1365 1546 1646 2148 2174 Byz Lect it^{a,aur,fl,n,q} vg syr^{ph,pal} cop^{sa,bo} goth geo^l.

⁸⁹ p⁴⁵ D W Θ f¹³ 565 700 l^{185,299} it^{b,c,d,ff2,i,r1} syr^s arm geo².

*Character-zones**The daughter*

The daughter never appears in the story except in the final verse, and then only as verification to the mother of the power of Jesus' healing word. The use of *θυγάτηρ* to describe her creates an immediate co-textual link with the *θυγάτηρ* of Jairus in Mark 5:23, 34–35; and the *θυγάτηρ* of Herodias in Mark 6:22. Taken together with the overall context of the dialogue in this pericope, and the language used to describe what takes place, such co-textual references provoke a level of sexual connotation within the passage, especially as it relates to the characters of Jesus and the Syro-Phoenecian woman.

The SyroPhoenecian Woman and Jesus

Four speech-utterances occur in this passage. At Mark 7:26 (ἡρώτα) the woman asks Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter (request); at Mark 7:27 (Ἄφες... γάρ) Jesus 'refuses' by making the comparison with dogs and children (refusal with explanation); at Mark 7:28 (ἀπεκρίθη) the woman counters, using the same image (counter-argument); at Mark 7:29 (ὑπάγε) Jesus accepts her argument and exorcises the daughter (declarative).⁹⁰

Initially, Jesus' desire appears to be for privacy: he enters a house and doesn't want anyone to know, but his intent is soon thwarted. In the immediate literary context, there is nothing to indicate that this 'no-one' excludes his disciples; there is no reference to the disciples throughout the entire pericope, and their presence has only been assumed by those who see Jesus' harsh words as being said for the sake of the disciples—as, perhaps, in Matthew's account. Accordingly, the assumption is being made here that the disciples were absent, since there is no reference to them being present on the narrative plane. As there is no indication of their presence—or that of anyone else—the possibility exists that when the woman appears, she and Jesus may be alone. Thus, the literary context hints at the potential for sexual intimacy in the encounter with the woman, if she and Jesus are alone together.⁹¹

⁹⁰ See also Cook, *Structure and persuasive power*, 218.

⁹¹ Contra M.A. Tolbert ("Mark," in C. Newsom and S. Ringe (eds.), *The women's Bible commentary*, 269), who believes that the woman approaches in a house because it is "the customary setting for reputable women."

The action of the woman in falling at the feet of someone could be seen as a gesture of a person seeking a favour from a patron. Thus, Jesus' response in the dialogue would be interpreted in the sense that God's favour should go first to the children of the family. But the question could be asked: is her coming to bow at his feet an invitation to patronage, or is it a covert offer of a sexual favour in return for the healing of her daughter?

At the level of the carnivalesque (reflecting the perceptions of popular/ 'vulgar' culture), there are certainly sexual connotations to their encounter, which make good sense of the sharp exchange of words between Jesus and the woman. The pericope therefore becomes part of the sexual series.⁹² Perhaps, in falling at his feet, she seeks to remove his footwear, and therefore, symbolically remove his normal social status. But because the feet are a frequent euphemism for male genitals, symbolic of power, her bowing down at his feet may indicate an approach to invite Jesus to exercise his power (sexual and healing). Προσεπέσεν in relation to another's feet has the understanding of prostrating oneself, falling down; but can also imply embrace.⁹³ The word is also used for the action of the woman with the haemorrhage (Mark 5:33)—a healing that has several parasexual implications.⁹⁴ Linked with the earlier use of γινώσκω (Mark 7:24, when Jesus did not want anyone to *know*), and with ἐξέρχομαι (at Mark 7:29, where Jesus has pronounced that the demon has *come out* of the daughter, and repeated at Mark 7:30 where the woman verifies that the demon has, in fact, gone) there are sexual (or at least parasexual) connotations here also. Certainly, the similar use of language suggests co-textual echoes here: the rich daughter of Israel comes to life (Mark 5:41–42) after the parasexual encounter between Jesus and the poor daughter of Israel (Mark 5:28–34); the Gentile

⁹² As considered in chapter 1.

⁹³ Other instances of προσπίπτω include references to falling at Jesus' knees (Luke 5:8) or falling down trembling before Jesus (Acts 16:29). Interestingly, Luke's version of the haemorrhaging woman (Luke 8:28) has the woman falling down trembling before Jesus (consistent with the Acts reference). The possibility that reference to falling *at his feet* has been carefully avoided by Luke suggests support for the possibility of parasexual connotations.

⁹⁴ See Susan Lochrie Graham's argument ("Silent voices: women in the gospel of Mark," *Semeia* 54, 1992, 149). Graham's claims for sexual connotations relate partly to the use of ἐξέρχομαι and γινώσκω; however, there are many other contexts in which these words have other meanings that do not appear to have sexual overtones. Her analysis thus requires the context to provide more of the parasexual meaning, for which the words offer an ancillary effect.

daughter is exorcised (Mark 7:29–30) after a parasexual encounter between Jesus and the Gentile woman (Mark 7:25–28).

Is privacy the real reason for Jesus not wanting anyone to know that he had entered the house? No indications are given concerning the owner of the house, but mention of the region of Tyre gives an intertextual suggestion of the wickedness of the area,⁹⁵ and since it is Gentile territory it could be concluded that the house Jesus enters is outside Jewish purity boundaries. Perhaps his desire for privacy may be symptomatic of lingering scruples despite the dialogue in Mark 7:1–23. It is also possible (based on the Isaianic tradition of Isaiah 23:17 that Tyre was a prostitute) that this was a 'house of ill-repute,' and Jesus—who has often been accused of association with sinners and tax collectors—enters it.⁹⁶ Does the reference to γινώσκω in οὐδένα ἤθελεν γνῶναι have sexual connotations, and imply that Jesus did not wish to be known (= not engage in sexual activity)? The matching phrase καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνήθη λαθεῖν indicating that he was unable to escape notice may support the traditional view of protecting privacy in wanting no-one to know. However, there is no indication that the woman came into the house (εἰσερχομαι is not used of her entry as it was in the previous verse for Jesus, although not much can be concluded from this minor distinction in usage), and the possibility exists that the woman may already have been in the house. If the house was a 'house-of-ill-repute' this could mean that the woman was a prostitute, and would lend further weight to the sexual connotations associated with her bowing down (= embracing) Jesus' 'feet' (= genitals).

There is significant dramatic tension introduced by the action of the woman. She demonstrates faith in the possibility of a healing miracle *but* the obstacle to the healing exists because of her socio-cultural status: on the basis of gender, she as woman contrasts to Jesus as male; her religious and cultural status as Greek contrasts with his Jewishness; her ethnic background is SyroPhoenician. Her question relates not to Jesus' ability to heal, but to his willingness to do so. The use

⁹⁵ Isaiah 23:17 Tyre "will return to her hire as a prostitute and will ply her trade with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth"; (see also Jeremiah 47:4; Ezekiel 26: 28:1–19 (especially 28:15–18); Joel 3:4; Amos 1:9–10; Zechariah 9:2–4.)

⁹⁶ Kathleen E. Corley, (*Private women, public meals: social conflict in the Synoptic tradition*, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993, 95–102) suggests the narrative potential of Jesus encountering a promiscuous woman, but concludes that Mark's interests are elsewhere. The possibilities afforded by a carnivalesque reading of the text would suggest that her first instinct was more accurate.

of the conjunction δέ in ἡ δέ γυνή ἦν Ἑλληνίς is unexpected. While usually this would be considered a weak particle, by contrast with the ‘normal’ Markan usage of καί parataxis, it probably indicates relative strength. Here the ethnic ancestry is revealed to the hearing-reader with δέ, possibly to indicate her ‘outside’ status relative to a Jewish male, so that the expected confrontation between her and Jesus would be apparent—and also undercut!

The term ‘dog’ is a strong insult.⁹⁷ Typically, this dialogue has been considered to be partly for the sake of the disciples, since they would be expecting Jesus to rebuff the woman, and the ensuing conversation—following the pattern of a rabbinic dialogue—would then be considered to be a ‘word-with-a-sideward-glance’ to the disciples. According to this view, Jesus has been attempting ‘to ‘satisfy’ his still non-understanding disciples (‘children’) with the ‘bread’ of his instruction and self-revelation to them in the privacy of the house (Mark 7:17, 24).’⁹⁸ Yet this appears to be reading Mark in light of Matthew: since the disciples are explicitly only present there (Matt 15:23) and the Matthean Jesus mentions *to them* that his mission is only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt 15:24).

What are the implications within this encounter if Jesus and the woman are alone and Jesus is not ‘playing to an audience’ of his disciples? Instead of it being an ironic comment from Jesus’ lips designed for the disciples’ sake, it is either playfully mocking the woman directly, or is representative of the attitude of the Markan Jesus.⁹⁹ Thus the word-with-a-sideward-glance is entirely the author’s ‘word’ directed to the hearing-reader. Jesus is drawn to the threshold by the woman, and his mission to the Gentiles is confirmed for him; the woman is ‘clean’, and the food that she speaks of can become the subject of the second feeding miracle which follows.

⁹⁷ The diminutive form κυνάρσις is used here (Mark 7:27)—possibly to soften the insult somewhat, or it may match with the fact that the favour is being sought for a child. See also Witherington, *Mark*. Tolbert (“Mark,” *Women’s Bible commentary*, 269) draws a comparison with the Cynics of the fourth century BCE; while this may be less likely, her reference to the shameless behaviour of the Cynics does bear some qualified comparison with the behaviour of the woman.

⁹⁸ Heil, *Mark*, 161.

⁹⁹ Jesus’ words appear strange, if there is no sexual sub-text seen in this encounter, given that it is not the first time that his ministry has extended into Gentile territory—as, for example, with the Gerasene demoniac.

Instead of responding positively, however, Jesus distances himself from the woman at every level—male-female, Jew-Gentile—and forces her instead to engage in the dialogue that ensues. There is a sharp contrast between Jesus’ reluctance here and his readiness at Mark 5:22–24 to respond to a similar parental request: in the earlier case, to a Jewish male who is socially prominent. Jesus’ threshold response subordinates her plea to the religious and ethnic differences between them.¹⁰⁰ There seems to be an element of uncertainty for the Markan Jesus, in relation to the primacy of the mission to the Jews; hence the response: Ἄφες πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα (Mark 7:27).¹⁰¹ The woman shows her understanding that out of the overabundance of his ‘bread’, Jesus can satisfy not only the disciples, but also others such as herself.¹⁰² Here she shows that she has penetrated the truth that the disciples have missed in the feeding miracle, sea-miracle and the associated teaching.

The presence of a similar reference to dogs and scraps, in Flavius Philostratus’ *Vita Apollonii* might indicate that there was an extant saying concerning the feeding of fragments to dogs; this may explain the woman’s retort if the saying was familiar in her region.¹⁰³ If the saying was known, then it is possible that the Markan Jesus’ rebuff to the woman was designed to elicit the response of the familiar saying.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Marcus (*Mark*, 470–471) has a helpful discussion on the tensions that may even have affected the fledgling churches—especially in the region around Tyre during the period of the Jewish War of 66–73 CE.

¹⁰¹ Broadhead (*Mark*, 72) asks the pertinent question “Is Jesus speaking tongue-in-cheek with a twinkle in his eye, knowing that both he and the woman have moved beyond such issues? Nothing in the story hints at this. Or is Jesus also a child of his own time. Subject to inheriting stereotypes, narrow self-interest and racist language? ... It is not at all clear where Jesus begins in this scene; it is, however, clear where he ends up.”

¹⁰² As Moloney rightly observes (*Mark*, 148) this discussion “links this narrative with the ongoing discussions over bread and feeding.” See, for example, Mark 6:51–52 and Mark 8:14–21.

¹⁰³ *Vita Apollonii* 1.19.38 to 1.19.43 “ταυτὶ δὲ τὰ οὕτω μικρὰ ξυλλεγόμενον παραπλήσιον που τοῖς κυσὶ πράττειν τοῖς σιτουμένοις τὰ ἐκπίπτοντα τῆς δαιτός, ὑπολαβὼν ὁ Δάμις ‘εἰ δαίτες’ ἔφη ‘θεῶν εἰσι καὶ σιτοῦνται θεοί, πάντως που καὶ θεράποντες αὐτοῖς εἰσιν, οἷς μέλει τοῦ μηδὲ τὰ πίπτοντα τῆς ἀμβροσίας ἀπόλλυσθαι.’”

¹⁰⁴ The process of response to a person’s speech is an important one in Bakhtin’s thought, since “when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he [sic] simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude towards it [and] ... either agrees or disagrees with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on.” (*PSG*, 68). It is possible that the Markan Jesus provides an opportunity for the woman to respond in just such a way to his word, so that he in turn can further respond to her. The same process also occurs with the (silent) response of the hearing-reader to the same words.

This would then have Jesus tacitly subverting his own rebuff. However, the possibility that Philostratus' work was an anti-gospel aretological composition written a century or so after the canonical Gospels to rehabilitate Apollonius as a rival to Jesus, might also mean that Philostratus has taken the saying recorded in the gospel and embellished it for his own purposes—for example the use of ambrosia rather than bread. Thus, it is equally possible that the saying may have been the retort of the Markan character herself, rather than a quotation of a known saying. If this were the case, the woman's argument has drawn Jesus to the dialogical threshold to respond positively in light of his own recent teaching on the clean/unclean distinction.¹⁰⁵ This then secures the Gentile mission that will follow, since the normal boundaries separating Jew and Gentile have now been crossed in this threshold encounter.¹⁰⁶

The carnivalesque elements within the dialogue between them are particularly intriguing, especially if this is considered to be part of a carnivalesque sexual series. The reference to 'dog' might also refer to her occupation as a prostitute.¹⁰⁷ In such a case, Jesus' harsh rebuke may actually be a refusal of her offer of sexual favours in return for healing her daughter; given that 'bread' is sometimes a euphemistic reference

¹⁰⁵ This would then be an example of Bakhtin's concept of "the *penetrated word*, that is, a word capable of actively and confidently interfering in the interior dialogue of the other person, helping that person to find his (sic) own voice." (*PDP*, 242.)

¹⁰⁶ See also Broadhead (*Mark*, 72). Moloney (*Mark*, 148) perceptively notes that the "skillful storyteller is leading a puzzled readership toward an unexpected conclusion as Jesus walks deeper into Gentile territory in v.31".

¹⁰⁷ For example, Robert Gagnon (*The Bible and homosexual practice: texts and hermeneutics*, Nashville: Abingdon, 2001, 49) notes the use of 'dog' as "denoting a disgusting transformation of masculinity and possibly also intercourse in a doglike position" and as an epithet associated with prostitutes (especially male cult prostitutes) in ancient NE texts (Gagnon, *Bible and homosexual practice*, 49, 56, 102.) "The slur 'dog' was applied to the *assinus*, the 'men-women' devoted to Ishtar who feminized their appearance, probably underwent castration, and for a fee allowed themselves to be penetrated anally by other males." (Gagnon, *Bible and homosexual practice*, 103.) He also notes Biblical references (especially Deut 23:18, Revelation 21:8) which he claims suggest emasculated male cult prostitutes (Gagnon, *Bible and homosexual practice*, 104–105), and maintains that "the biblical authors rejected...cult prostitutes—and surely not just because they were connected to Asherah, as the epithet 'dogs' indicates" (Gagnon, *Bible and homosexual practice*, 109). While I am personally uncomfortable with Gagnon's hermeneutics, which would be challenged by many, his survey of texts is comprehensive, and gives a strong suggestion that the widely-used insult had a strong sexual connotation, often associated with prostitution. Purely anecdotal evidence suggests that even today prostitutes (at least in Australia) refer to each other as 'dogs!'

to semen,¹⁰⁸ Jesus is making a dual-level implication. It is inappropriate for his bread (= semen) to be thrown (= given indiscriminately) to a dog (= prostitute and foreigner); *and* it is inappropriate for his mission to be taken from the children (of Israel) and given to foreigners. Thus, his refusal indicates to the woman at one level that a sexual transaction is inappropriate between them, therefore re-establishing the 'distance' between them so that she has the freedom to be 'equal' since this is not going to be a subordinate (sexual) exploitation. The woman can now, with her dignity intact, respond to the other level of implication—and her penetrative-word dialogue forces Jesus to respond to the dialogical threshold concerning his own mission.

Significance of the dialogical 'voices'

The 'otherness' of the woman's 'voice' indicates that it is essentially *equal* with Jesus' 'voice'. Initially, the woman's 'voice' is seeking to restore her (absent) daughter's 'voice' from the evil spirit's 'voice'. Given the possibility of the sexual overture implied by the woman's actions, Jesus' 'voice' is initially harsh and re-establishes the distance between their 'voices'. Yet there is ambiguity in Jesus' 'voice', and the woman's 'voice' can respond provocatively (even suggestively) while still remaining wholly faithful and 'other.' Her 'voice' is convincing, and Jesus' 'voice' capitulates to her request. His 'voice' then speaks the reality that her 'voice' has requested.

The hearing-reader's 'voice' reveals initial shock and shame at the brazenness of the encounter. However, the author's 'voice' speaks a word-with-a-sideward-glance to challenge the hearing-reader ultimately to speak a similar bold faith in the overabundance of Jesus' saving power. Thus the hearing-reader's 'voice' should already be aligned with the author's 'voice' before the (Gentile) feeding which occurs 'during those days' at Mark 8:1-13, and against the disciples' uncomprehending 'voice' at Mark 8:14-21.

¹⁰⁸ James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern texts: relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969, 100. See also Gagnon, *Bible and homosexual practice*, 49.

CHAPTER THREE

‘THRESHOLD’ CHRONOTOPE AND COMIC CARNIVAL IN MARK 6:14–29 AND 16:1–8

Bakhtin, Threshold & Mark

The placement of these two passages together may, at first, appear unusual. In the case of Mark 16:1–8, it would seem preferable to hold the end for after the Passion narrative (see chapter 5). It is helpful, however, from a dialogical perspective, to demonstrate at the outset the unfinalisability of Mark in the way that the end draws the hearing-reader back to the beginning. Thus, it becomes difficult, from a Bakhtinian perspective, to operate in a purely ‘chronological’ sequence. In the case of Mark 6:14–29, the absence of the primary characters present throughout the rest of the Gospel would seem to provide good reasons for seeing this pericope as atypical, and therefore one best avoided. The unusual nature of the vocabulary and style compared to the rest of the Gospel would seem to reinforce the atypical nature of the passage. This pericope contains a significant proportion of Markan *hapax legomena*; there is an absence of the more usual historic present; an increased use of aorists, imperfects, and participles (especially of the genitive absolute); and a more ‘cultivated’ style, so that some scholars have therefore questioned whether this passage is derived from an Aramaic original.¹

The response of many scholars has been to see Mark 6:14–29—especially if it has been intercalated into the account of the disciples’ mission activity—as foreshadowing the ultimate fate of Jesus (and, by extension, anyone who is his disciple).² Jesus, like John, will be arrested, executed, and his body placed in a tomb. Thus Mark 6:17, 27–29 is proleptic of

¹ Including E. Lohmeyer, quoted in Gundry, *Mark*, 312.

² Francis J. Moloney (“Mark 6:6b–30: Mission, the Baptist, and failure,” *CBQ*, 63, 2001, 647–663) provides a helpful review of the implications of this passage in the context of the material framing it, noting *inter alia* that “[t]he majority of commentators do not see Mark 6:6b–30 as a Markan sandwich construction.” (647) Moloney’s analysis demonstrates how the passage alerts the hearing-reader to the disciples’ failure(s).

the events of Mark 14:43–15:47.³ Most would agree that the passage serves to shift the blame from Roman authority (in this case, the Roman puppet Herod, and later the Roman procurator Pilate) to others. Here in Mark 6, the ‘blame’ for John’s death rests with Herodias and her daughter; in Mark 14–15, the ‘blame’ for Jesus’ death rests with the crowds and the Jewish leadership.

Both passages do, however, provide a range of opportunities for demonstrating the applicability of the ‘threshold’ chronotope. This chronotope is significant in these two passages (as well as in the Passion narrative); although it could also be argued that the nature of dialogue itself establishes thresholds that are therefore evident in all chronotopes.⁴ Several ‘thresholds’ are encountered in both 6:14–29 and 16:1–8, leading to dialogical interactions between characters (first-level dialogue), including dialogue with characters such as Jesus and the disciples that, although absent, are significant for the passages. Dialogue with the hearing-reader, through various ‘voices’ in the text, provides a significant key to understanding the passage, and provides the passages with an importance within the overall shape of the Gospel. At third-level dialogue, there are significant intertextual comparisons that can be made, especially with *Ephesiaca* and *Callirhoe*. Using these two examples may seem unusual, given that they will be considered as two key elements in the discussion concerning the adventure chronotope; their relevance is partly because of the folkloric nature of both of these romances.⁵

It is also apparent that different aspects of the carnivalesque (comic and tragic) are evident in the passages. The first passage could be considered an anticipatory passion narrative embedded in the earlier

³ Hugh Anderson (*The Gospel of Mark*, Edinburgh: Oliphants, 1976, 166) claims (contra Taylor, *Mark*, 307) that it is more than an interlude to span the period of the disciple’s mission activity.

⁴ Bakhtin notes the potential connection with the motif of encounter (*FTC*, 248).

⁵ The ‘folkloric’ nature of Mark 6:14–29 shows strong similarities with both these texts. Note that the generic contacts referred to here relate to the chronotopic ‘orientation’ of the text. Thus the points of comparison cannot be purely on the basis of common morpho-syntactic elements, since “genre forms do not lend themselves to syntactic definition. The [folk-tale] as such does not consist of sentences and periods. It follows that the thematic unity of the work is inseparable from its primary orientation in its environment, inseparable, that is to say, from the circumstances of place and time” (*FM* 132). Bakhtin comments: “Folklore is in general saturated with time; all of its images are profoundly chronotopic. Time in folklore, the fullness of time in it, the folkloric nature, the folkloric human yardsticks of time—all these are very important and fundamental problems.” (*BSHR*, 52).

section of Mark; the second passage is a post-passion narrative, that creates a 'conclusion' to the identity and mission of Jesus which draws characters (and the hearing-reader) back to the earliest section of Mark. The passages thus bring together elements of the passion motif and secrecy motif for examination in light of Bakhtinian categories.⁶ Elements of carnival are evident throughout, especially in Mark 6:14–29: ranging from the inversions where the carnival fool corrects the king and where the princess dances like a prostitute; elements of the scandalous, including the nature of Herod's marriage with Herodias, and Herod's response to the dancing daughter; the bizarre elements of carnival, including the gruesome request for John's head on a platter; and the transgression of bodily barriers as John is beheaded and then the head is (at least symbolically, if not actually) eaten by Herodias.

Bakhtin and the Beheaded Baptizer (Mark 6:14–29)

Dialogue with the text

There are several instances of textual variants, but generally the preferred text coincides with that of the UBS committee.⁷ One of the key textual issues for the Gospel—the 'prefatory title' at Mark 1:1—is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider in detail; yet it is significant in terms of the identity-characterisation of Jesus, as will be mentioned below.

In Mark 6:14, a number of texts⁸ attribute the saying that John had risen from the dead to Herod (ἔλεγεν ὅτι Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων ἐγήγερται ἐκ νεκρῶν) rather than to anonymous third parties (ἔλεγον ὅτι Ἰωάννης...) The ἔλεγον reading is the reading assumed here.⁹ It therefore allows for Herod to engage in dialogue with three other 'voices' and draw his conclusion; rather than have Herod state his position, have

⁶ The passion motif and the secrecy motif could be considered to be an arena for the tragic and comic carnivalesque respectively.

⁷ Several intriguing possibilities present themselves for further dialogue with the text, including the dialogue with the text by later scribes.

⁸ **Σ Α C K L Δ Θ Π f¹ f¹³** 28 33 565 700 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 1216 1230 1241 1242 1253 1344 1365 1546 1646 2148 2174 *Byz Lect^m* *it*^{a,aur,c,f,l,j,q,r,1} *vg syr*^{s,p,h,pal} *cop*^{sa,bo} *goth arm eth geo*^{1,A}.

⁹ This reading is supported by the UBS Greek New Testament as the likely original reading, based on the textual evidence (B W *it*^{a,b,d,ff2} Augustine).

two other ‘voices’ offering contrasting views—for reasons which could only be conjectured—and then merely have Herod reiterate what he has already stated.

The text at Mark 6:20 is more doubtful, but καὶ ἀκούσας αὐτοῦ πολλὰ ἡπόρει¹⁰ is preferable to the variant καὶ ἀκούσας αὐτοῦ πολλὰ ἐποίει.¹¹ In addition, it is internally appropriate for Herod to be greatly perplexed¹² if the ‘voice’ of John has taken Herod to a threshold which he is ambivalent about crossing. At third-level dialogue, this textual variant provides for an intertextual and co-textual reading to take place. Co-textually, Mark is inviting the hearing-reader to draw comparisons (especially on re-reading) between Herod’s procrastination and Pilate’s hesitation concerning Jesus’ execution.¹³ Intertextually, this is the only instance in the New Testament where ἀπορέω does not take the middle voice.¹⁴ Its construction here has direct comparison especially in *Ephesiaca*, where Manto is perplexed about what to do: καὶ ἡπόρει ὅ τι ποιῆσαι (*Ephesiaca* 2.3.2). Later Habrocomes, whose plight is poignant, also is perplexed: Ταῦτα πάντα εἰς μείζονα συμφορὰν τὸν Ἀβροκόμην ἦγε καὶ ἡπόρει ὅστις γένηται (*Ephesiaca* 2.4.6). More problematic is the difficult reading at Mark 6:22, in which Herod’s daughter appears to be named Herodias, based on the reading of τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτοῦ Ἡρῳδιάδος,¹⁵ despite that in Mark 6:24 the girl is Herodias’ daughter.¹⁶ The simpler readings have αὐτῆς (in the predicative position, rather than the attributive) rather than αὐτοῦ,¹⁷ or eliminate either option.¹⁸ Gundry makes several interesting points in favour of αὐτῆς, based on a scribal emendation after the copyist failed to notice the

¹⁰ Ⲱ B L Θ l⁰⁴³ cop^{sa,bo}

¹¹ A C D K Π f¹ f¹³ 28 33 565 700 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 1216 1230 1241 1242 1253 1344 1365 1546 1646 2148 2174 Byz *Lect^m* it^{a,aur,b,c,d,f,ff2,i,l,q,r1} vg syr^{s,p,h,pal} goth arm geo^b Diatessaron^a. The grounds given by the UBS committee of strong external support, common Markan style, and intrinsic superiority of meaning, provide a strong argument for this reading.

¹² Rather than ‘doing many things.’

¹³ Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 202) note the connection between the two ‘weak-willed’ men.

¹⁴ It occurs in middle voice in John 13:22, Acts 25:20; 2 Cor 4:8; Gal 4:20; here it is active voice.

¹⁵ Ⲱ B D L Θ 565.

¹⁶ This is the chosen text by the UBS committee, on the basis of the strength of external attestation.

¹⁷ A C K (W omit τῆς) Θ Π f¹³ 28 33 700 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 1216 1230 1241 1242 1253 1344 1365 1546 1646 2148 2174 Byz *Lect^m* it^{a,d,ff2,i,l,q,r1} vg syr^h.

¹⁸ f¹ it^{aur,b,c,f} syr^{s,p,pal} cop^{sa,bo} goth arm eth geo Diatessaron^{a,p}.

redundant Aramaism that anticipates the name of the daughter's mother ('her daughter, ... Herodias's') nor a quasi-demonstrative use of αὐτῆς (the daughter of that ... Herodias' ... and therefore switched to the masculine pronoun and omitted τῆς, perhaps under the supposition that Herod would hardly have sworn to give as much as half his kingdom to anyone's daughter but his own. The copyist then thought either that the daughter had the same name that Herod's new wife had ... or, more awkwardly ... that the daughter was Herodias's as well as Herod's ...¹⁹

While a copyist may have made such assumptions, and while there may be even a remote possibility that the daughter was known by the name Herodias—although the external evidence from Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae*²⁰ is in favour of Salome—the facticity of the reference or its textual history is less important: from the perspective of characterisation, it is probably more significant if the daughter remains un-named.²¹ The ambivalent reference in Mark 6:22 could serve to strengthen the impression that it is ultimately Herodias who is behind the dance; she uses the girl in her (hitherto unsuccessful) scheme to kill John, being prepared to sacrifice the girl's honour to attain her desired goal!

The use of πολλά in Mark 6:23 fits well with Markan usage,²² and also with the nature of Herod's boastful oath. Its inclusion stresses the vehemence of his speech, and is a hint at the level of arousal that Herod may be experiencing.

Character-zones

Several speech-utterances occur in this passage, commencing with the assertions of others (ἔλεγον ... ἔλεγον ... ἔλεγον ... (Mark 6:14–15)) and finally Herod (ἔλεγεν (Mark 6:16)) concerning the identity of Jesus. The Baptizer's speech-utterance (ἔλεγεν (Mark 6:18)) accusing Herod

¹⁹ Gundry, *Mark*, 320.

²⁰ *Antiquitates Judaicae*, 18.5.2.

²¹ Guelich seems to hint at confusion of the daughter's name with the mother's (*Mark*, 332). Anderson ("Dancing daughter," 121) comments "Various manuscripts read *autou* (of him) or *aulas* [sic] (of her) in 6:22. If the original read *autou*, the little girl is Herod's daughter and her name is Herodias, like her mother's. If the original read *aulas* [sic], the girl is Herodias's daughter and Herod's niece. This relationship is further complicated by the extra-Markan information from Josephus that Herodias (the mother) was Herod Antipas' niece; and that Philip the tetrarch was not Herod Antipas's brother. Philip the tetrarch married Salome, Herodias's daughter." By contrast Douglas Hare (*Mark*, Louisville, Kent: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, 74) dismisses all such possibilities out of hand.

²² p^{45vid} D Θ 565 700 it^{a,b,d,ff2,i,q} arm.

establishes the dialogue between them. Herod's speech-utterance (εἶπεν ... Αἴτησόν... (Mark 6:22)) promising Herodias' daughter whatever she wished establishes the threshold between them that gives cause for the speech-utterance in which the daughter confers with Herodias (εἶπεν... αἰτήσωμαι... εἶπεν (Mark 6:24)). The resultant speech-utterance (ἡτήσατο λέγουσα (Mark 6:25) is a murderous request leading to Herod's final speech-utterance—the order for John's execution (ἀποστείλας (Mark 6:27)).

At first glance, the key characters in this passage are Herod, John the Baptist, Herodias and her un-named daughter. Minor characters include high officials, military officers and leaders of Galilee, members of the 'crowd', and, of course, the executioner. Threshold moments occur throughout the narrative: when Herod has to consider his understanding of Jesus' identity²³ while weighing the claims of the various 'voices'; when John continues to speak to Herod about his marriage; when Herodias takes the opportune moment to sacrifice her daughter's honour to achieve her ends; when the daughter seeks her mother's advice and crosses the threshold from innocence to murderous complicity; when Herod chooses to sacrifice John's head (= honour) rather than his own honour.²⁴

Minor characters

Most of the minor characters (such as those present at Herod's feast—the high officials, military officers and leaders of Galilee—members of

²³ Bruce Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh (*Social science commentary on the synoptic gospels*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, 216) consider that "[t]he question being posed is not one of 'identity' as it would be in the modern world. It is rather one of honor or status. Apparently the process of reassessing where to place Jesus on the honor scale is still going on." The distinction, although valid, does not change the importance of the question of Jesus' identity *in relation to the prefatory title*. Thus, while honour scale differences may have significance within the world of the text itself, they are less important than the identity question in the dialogue between the hearing-reader and the 'voices' in the text.

²⁴ Marcus (*Mark*, 402) notes several other instances of granting a favour at a banquet which must be honoured—even though this sometimes has very negative consequences: "Herodotus (*Histories* 9.108–13) describes how Xerxes was constrained, by the Persian custom that at royal banquets every favor asked must be granted, to accede to his wife Amestris' desire that her own sister-in-law be turned over to her; Amestris subsequently tortured and maimed this rival, just as Herodias uses the opportunity provided by Herod's banquet to have her enemy murdered... Livy, moreover, in recounting the life of Crassus, recoils at the horror of staining a feast with the blood of an innocent man to gratify the whim of a prostitute (*History of Rome*, 39.43), and Plutarch describes the bringing of the head of an enemy to a king at a feast (*Parallel Lives*, *Crassus*, 33.1–3)."

the 'crowd', and the executioner) function virtually as 'moving scenery,' however unseemly.²⁵ They do not reflect a particular 'voice'; they do not enter into any threshold encounter, although the silence of those at the feast is indicative of their assent to the daughter's dance, Herod's boast, and the subsequent execution. The hearing-reader therefore would view the minor characters as unreliable. Those present at the feast would be considered unreliable, especially in light of the reference at Mark 3:6 to the Herodians (presumably supporters of Herod, or members of his party) who conspire with the Pharisees against Jesus. The term used (σπεκουλάτορα) to describe the bodyguard heightens the darkness of the narrative: this term is also often used of spies, and the hearing-reader will therefore recognise that the executioner is a 'shady' character.²⁶

The members of the crowd are unreliable, because the dialogue with Jesus' identity that has been continuing since the start of Mark clearly shows that their understandings of Jesus are inadequate. The series of answers to the implied question of Jesus' identity have been placed on the lips of indeterminate crowd members, who respond with the identifications which will be reiterated in Mark 8:28 when the question of Jesus' identity is placed before his disciples. Here, however, the identifications do not serve as part of a threshold encounter: the un-named members (or groups) of the crowd are not called to a threshold, and make no dialogic encounter with Jesus in which a faith-response occurs.

These identifications are, however, at second-level dialogue, an authorial 'word-with-a-sideward-glance' to the hearing-reader, who is implicitly encouraged to reject these designations as inadequate guesses, both now, at Mark 8:28, and later in the passion narrative. As a word-with-a-sideward-glance, these expressed opinions about Jesus are shown to be inadequate, because having recently witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter, the hearing-reader is aware that resurrection from the dead is entirely different from the concept of reincarnation implicit in the Baptizer-*redivivus* designation; Jesus can hardly be Elijah returned

²⁵ Myers (*Binding the strong man*, 216) comments amusingly that "Mark accurately describes the inner circle of power as an incestuous relationship involving governmental, military, and commercial interests." Myers sees the passage as "sarcastic social caricature... [that] paves the way for Mark's supreme political parody, the trial and execution of the Human One by the collaborative Jewish and Roman powers." (*Binding the strong man*, 216).

²⁶ Herod's use of bodyguards imitates the pattern of the Roman emperors, and is further indicative of Herod's ostentation.

to earth, since the Baptizer has been identified as the Elijah-figure; nor is Jesus as ‘one of the prophets’ an adequate identification, since he is clearly much more.

It is other (‘major’) characters looming in the background that must now be considered, however, since this passage is one of few within Mark where the central character of Jesus, and other primary characters—the disciples—are not immediately present, but constitute a significant background at several dialogical levels.

The disciples

At first-level dialogue, it is because of the mighty works that the disciples perform on Jesus’ behalf in the course of their mission activity that Herod is drawn to the threshold to consider the nature of Jesus’ identity.²⁷ The effect of the intercalation of this pericope into the

²⁷ More than any other character group, the disciples have been a source of controversy among scholars. Best (*Disciples*, 101) summarises the differing views held by scholars concerning the disciples. He notes that the disciples may represent themselves in a ‘historical’ sense, with Mark’s approval or disapproval; they may represent a group claiming a succession to them, with Mark favouring or opposing such groups; they may represent the whole church or a part; or they may be purely informational. Best would see a primarily *pastoral* purpose to the portrayal of the disciples in the Gospel, rather than a *polemical* purpose (contra Weeden). J. Dewey, (“Point of view and the disciples in Mark,” *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1982, 101), notes: “The disciples are portrayed with a considerable degree of mimetic illusion, thus closeness. [They] are often presented in direct speech... [and] frequently inside views of the disciples’ thoughts and emotions are given... yet [they] do not appear to be portrayed with a greater degree of mimesis or closeness than other characters in the narrative.” By contrast, Whitney Taylor Shiner (*Follow me! disciples in Markan rhetoric*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995, 12) considers that “when the flat disciples of the individual episodes are strung together ‘as pearls on a string,’ they can be seen as multi-sided, but this may only be our modern penchant for complexity of characterization that we have discovered.” More helpful is Tannehill’s (“Mark as narrative Christology,” 82–84) identification of different phases in the portrayal of the disciples—firstly, the positive aspects, which encourage the hearing-reader to identify with them, and then the negative aspects cause hearing-readers to distance themselves from the less acceptable behaviour of disciples, as they are shown to be fatal failures. Thus Tannehill maintains that the disciples represent the Markan readers rather than historical opponents. He sees the reader as being drawn to stand with Jesus rather than the faithless disciples. Tannehill makes the positive contribution of stressing that restoration to faithful discipleship is a gracious possibility, but not an inevitable fact. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon (“The Jewish leaders in the gospel of Mark a literary study of Marcan characterization,” *JBL* 108, 1989, 279) sees a complex pattern of discipleship in Mark,

involving the lively struggle between faith and doubt, trust and fear, obedience and denial. The author of Mark... schematizes the characters of his story; he paints extreme cases of enemies and exemplars as the background against which the trials and joys of followers may stand out more boldly. If Mark’s Gospel is in any sense a polemic, it is a polemic not against the Jews as a group or an opposition

flow of the narrative commencing at Mark 6:7 has been to leave the disciples in narrative suspension—a ploy which will serve the author's co-textual dialogue with the hearing-reader concerning the nature and destiny of discipleship.²⁸

Thus, while not on the scene, there is a co-textual reference occurring that has an impact upon the discipleship narrative, so that the disciples are backgrounded but still part of the dialogical interaction that is taking place. Since this is one of few instances of analepsis in Mark, the episode of the Baptizer's fate also becomes proleptic for the fate of the disciples and for Jesus.

While the hearing-reader will only notice some aspects on re-reading, the contrasts between the disciples of the Baptizer and those of Jesus become quite remarkable. However, it is especially in third-level dialogue that such aspects become clear. Co-textually, there is a contrast between the disciples of the Baptizer who claim his body for burial, and Jesus' disciples who fail to observe customary burial protocols but leave such matters to Joseph of Arimathea and some of the women.²⁹ Intertextually, however, such a basic failure becomes a basis for criticism of Chaereas in Chariton's novel: οὐδὲ θάψαι Καλλιρόην περιμένεις; ἀλλοτρίαις χερσὶ τὸ σῶμα πιστεύεις; (*Callirhoe* 1.6.1). (Are you not even waiting around to bury Callirhoe? Are you entrusting the body to the hands of others?). Given the early date of Chariton's work, it is possible that Mark and his hearing-readers may have been aware of this text, therefore heightening the comparison with the disciples' failure to bury Jesus' body. Even if not, Chariton's text still highlights

Christian group supposedly represented by the disciples, but against a simplistic view of discipleship (or followership) that sees unfailing support or unfailing enmity as the only options, rather than as the background against which the complex relations of Jesus and his followers must be worked out.

See also S.C. Barton, *Discipleship and family ties in Mark and Matthew*, SNTS 80, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Moloney (*Mark*, 2002) gives an extensive analysis of the unrelenting critique of the disciples by Mark.

²⁸ Hooker, (*Mark*, 158) notes the artificiality of the intercalation of the Baptist's death and the mission of the Twelve, since there is apparently "no logical connection between the two themes." By contrast, Moloney ("Mark 6:6b–30") correctly observes that the effect of the flanking passages concerning the mission and return of the disciples does provide the necessary connection.

²⁹ See Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *In the company of Jesus*, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, 157–158. Moloney (*Mark*, 127) agrees with Malbon noting that "the Baptist is buried by his loyal disciples, but Jesus, abandoned by his disciples (see 14:50), is buried by a member of the council, Joseph of Arimathea, who should have been his enemy."

the scandal of not ensuring burial of a loved one in the circum-Mediterranean world.

Mark 6:14–29 serves to further develop the inside/outside polarity in Mark, and also (especially) the discipleship narrative. In the middle of the disciples' mission activity, their failure is foreshadowed: it is an outsider that arranges for Jesus' burial. Positioned just before the passion predictions (in Mark 8–10), the passage further underlines the disciples' failure to understand the nature of true discipleship, which may involve martyrdom.

Jesus

Also not present, but in the foreground nonetheless, is the character of Jesus. The whole tenor of this intercalated section is to focus again on the question of Jesus' identity and how people respond to him. At first-level dialogue, Herod is shown to be entering into dialogic interaction with the opinions of others, and his own (guilty) superstitions. However, this is an authorial device, inserting the γάρ- clause at Mark 6:14, and the various 'voices' of Mark 6:14–15 between καὶ ἤκουσεν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρώδης (Mark 6:14) and ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἡρώδης ἔλεγεν (Mark 6:16), culminating in Herod's conclusion that John has somehow come back from death.

The second-level dialogue with the hearing-reader provides the first-time hearing-reader with unexpected information concerning John's death, since the Baptizer has been narratively suspended (in prison) since Mark 1:14. It also provides the hearing-reader with information concerning the reasons for Jesus' increasing fame: because of the evidence of mighty works: ἐνεργοῦσιν αἱ δυνάμεις ἐν αὐτῷ (Mark 6:14).³⁰ More importantly, these opinions become a form of dialogue with the question of Jesus' identity. The three interpretations of Jesus' identity each have their own significance. If Jesus is like any other of the prophets (ὅτι προφήτης ὡς εἰς τῶν προφητῶν) he presents no threat to Herod (Mark 6:15). Jesus has already been exposed as a prophet without honour (Mark 6:4), and therefore is not someone to be feared. If he is Elijah, then he is the herald of Yahweh's eschatological judgement; there would be grounds for fear if this 'voice' were correct. Worse yet,

³⁰ Interestingly, there is no evidence that John the Baptist ever performed any 'mighty works'. The connection with the story of the Baptizer is clearly artificial—an authorial device which serves other narrative purposes in its present context.

if he is the Baptizer *redivivus*, for then Herod's power—in this case to eliminate the troublesome prophet—would be shown to be broken.³¹ Herod chooses the most alarming option. The fact that he makes this choice sounds a corresponding alarm for the hearing-reader, especially in light of the reference to the plot between members of Herod's party and their traditional opponents, the Pharisees, at Mark 3:6. This will be further reinforced with the warning against τῆς ζύμης Ἡρώδου (Mark 8:15). This dialogue among various 'voices' concerning the identity of Jesus therefore returns the hearing-reader to the identity issue from Mark 1; especially since Mark 6:17–29 could logically occur after Mark 1:13 (at least in part) or perhaps after Mark 1:15, connecting with the account of the Baptizer.

The identity issue is critical to the whole of the Gospel, especially the first section, and constantly refers the hearing-reader back to the prefatory title in Mark 1:1. Jesus is both the central character and also the first character to be introduced—although only by title until after John the Baptist is introduced: the hearing-reader is informed by the author that this is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The prefatory title, although considered by some to be doubtful textually,³² is programmatic for an understanding of character throughout the Gospel, since each threshold dialogue ultimately concerns the identity of Jesus Christ as Son of God. The dialogue with the prefatory title that occurs throughout the Gospel—in which both characters and the hearing-reader are invited to dialogue with the content that Jesus is Son of God—continues right through to the cross.³³

Four declarations will occur to confirm the title: at the start of the Gospel by the divine 'voice' at Jesus' baptism (Mark 1:11), although others will probably not be aware of this announcement; at the

³¹ See also Myers, *Binding the strong man*, 217. Myers sees these as reflecting political interpretations of Jesus' mission and identity.

³² Bruce Metzger et al., (*A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Stuttgart: UBS, 1975, 73) regard this as a possible scribal expansion on a shorter reading. The support of the full version of the prefatory title in B D W—and the possible scribal confusion over shortened *nomina sacra*—prevented the UBS committee from omitting it altogether. In support of the longer reading, it should also be noted that Χριστός is always qualified by another nearby title in Mark's narrative (e.g. Mark 8:29; 12:35–37; 14:61–62). Strictly speaking, therefore, 'christology' is *always* dialogical in Mark.

³³ Michael Trainor (*The quest for home—the household in Marks' community*, Collegeville, Minnesota: A. Michael Glazier Book—Liturgical Press, 2001, 79) argues for both christological titles, correctly concluding that "the identity of Jesus is a key issue on which Mark wants the reader to reflect."

mid-point of the Gospel in the confession at Caesarea Philippi by Simon Peter (Mark 8:29) (who will immediately be cast into the role of the Satan (Mark 8:33)); at the Transfiguration, again by the divine ‘voice’, but this time accessible to the inner circle of disciples (Mark 9:7) who are then commanded to silence (Mark 9:9); and towards the end of the Gospel on the lips of the centurion (Mark 15:39), after all other characters have abandoned Jesus.

Only the divine ‘voice’ can be considered ‘reliable’ in terms of truly understanding Jesus’ identity, and the hearing-reader is invited early in the Gospel to respond to this understanding. The process of clarification for the hearing-reader continues in this passage from Mark 6, with Jesus’ identity debated publicly for the first time in the Gospel. This, in turn, will raise some concerns for the hearing-reader since there has been a clear desire on the part of the main character for his identity to remain secret.

In this pericope, Herod hears various ‘voices’ concerning Jesus’ identity and, not being privy to the information conveyed in the prefatory title and initial confirmation, draws his own conclusion. The fact that it is the wrong one is to be expected by the hearing-reader, who would recall the words of Mark 4:12: ἵνα βλέποντες βλέπωσιν καὶ μὴ ἴδωσιν, καὶ ἀκούοντες ἀκούωσιν καὶ μὴ συνιῶσιν, μήποτε ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἄφεθῇ αὐτοῖς. The significance of these words should be noted, as they would seem to be central to an understanding of character in Mark: the threshold encounter between Jesus and another is usually based on the capacity of the interindividual character to listen and respond. The response of the crossing of the threshold becomes the locus of the dialogue at a strategic level (i.e. the level at which the dialogue is designed to evince a response from the hearing-reader). For example, the woman with the haemorrhage crosses the threshold (Mark 5:33), and is told that her faith has made her well; the hearing-reader is challenged to respond similarly with an expression of faith in Jesus. Whenever an interindividual character crosses the threshold, there is a dialogue established with the hearing-reader who must also ‘come to the threshold.’ In the case of Herod, his conclusion also serves to alert the hearing-reader to his unreliability as a character, and therefore encourages the hearing-reader’s antipathy to Herod and the values he represents.

The dialogue with the prefatory title also establishes part of the carnival reversal evidenced throughout the Gospel, and which in the first section (before the Passion narrative) centres predominantly around

this secrecy motif. Jesus is Christ-Son-of-God: that is, a Son-of-God type of Christ as distinct from other expected Christs/Messiahs. This fact will rarely be penetrated, and of those who do, unclean spirits or demonic powers will be commanded to silence (Mark 3:11–12, 5:7), and all others will be sworn to secrecy by Jesus, which secret they will immediately break (for example, Mark 1:45, 7:36).

Comic carnival is evidenced in the first section of the Gospel partly within this secrecy motif: a carnivalesque reversal occurs with the contrast between 'insider' and 'outsider', with only those outside the boundaries realising Jesus' identity. The elements of 'tragic carnival' are also evidenced in this passage since a clear connection is being made between Jesus and the martyred John, leading to a sense of foreboding concerning John as 'carnival fool' who is beheaded and his greater counterpart, Jesus as carnival fool.

The intercalated section thus acts proleptically as a portent of Jesus' own arrest and subsequent death.³⁴ These verses (Mark 6:14–16) dealing with public opinion about Jesus clearly serve as more than a bridging passage into the account of the Baptizer's death—introduced obliquely in the opinion expressed by 'some' about Jesus that assumes the Baptizer's death. These verses provide the first 'public' account of Jesus' identity as the subject of discussion. Prior to this, the identification of Jesus has occurred at the boundary of the (physical) world and the supernatural one: in the wilderness, by the divine 'voice' heard only by Jesus at the baptism (Mark 1:10–11); and he has only been 'known' by evil spirits (Mark 1:23–25, 34; 3:11–12; 5:7–13), who have then been immediately silenced ἵνα μὴ αὐτὸν φανερόν ποιήσωσιν (Mark 3:12). Now, Jesus' name has become known φανερόν γὰρ ἐγένετο τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ (Mark 6:14), and the co-textual connection between the two, sounds the note of warning for the hearing-reader. We should also note that Herod's fear (Mark 6:20) that John had been ἐγήγερται ἐκ νεκρῶν (Mark 6:14) connects co-textually with ἠγέρθη (Mark 16:6) and the fear of the women, and provides the hearing-reader with a dialogical connection to Jesus' resurrection.

³⁴ Note, for example that the usage of τὸ πτώμα (Mark 6:29) connects with the same usage at Mark 15:45, where Pilate grants τὸ πτώμα to Joseph of Arimathea, despite the fact that Joseph (Mark 15:43) requested τὸ σῶμα. This, combined with the usage of σῶμα elsewhere in the Gospels, including in parallel passages, suggests that the Markan choice of this word is deliberately designed to draw the association, as noted by Witherington, (*Mark*, 216).

The pattern of the ‘voices’ should also be noted. The question arises concerning whether this pattern indicates some privileging of one ‘voice’ over another. Certainly the character Herod privileges one of the ‘voices’, but it is less apparent whether the narrator also does, and what motive would be behind such privileging. Herod’s privileging of one ‘voice’ (the first one) in the pattern of three ‘voices’, therefore indicates that the extension of the Elijah-Elisha tandem-relationship suggested by John-Jesus is being developed here. The succession is from ‘greatest’ to ‘least’ in the three ‘voices’, since John is the eschatological Elijah (and therefore greater than the first Elijah); the phrase ὅτι προφήτης ὡς εἷς τῶν προφητῶν (Mark 6:15) is a more vague reference that indicates ‘another’ indeterminate—and therefore still lesser—prophet.

If focalisation is occurring here, with occasional narratorial intrusions, then it is to be expected that such privileging would be less apparent on the part of the narrator. In fact, it would seem likely that focalisation is an important matter: the narrator focalises the scene from Herod’s perspective, relating to the reader what Herod hears, fears and knows. Whether Mark 6:17–29 is similarly focalised to the introductory verse at Mark 6:14–16, is less clear. Certainly Herod is the central character, and some of his point of view is evident, therefore suggesting the possibility of focalisation despite the continuing intrusion of the narrator!

Other texts can provide helpful comparisons here, including *Ephesiaca*. Focalisation is, according to Kathryn Chew, what makes *Ephesiaca* distinctive in terms of style.³⁵ Chew maintains that after the first book, which is narrated with zero focalisation, the rest of the work is internally focalised from the perspective of the main characters. It is for this reason, she maintains, that

there is much less description of characters and surroundings—these elements are important for an omniscient narrator but not for a poor suffering character. The intense character-oriented action does not accom-

³⁵ The tendency among many scholars is to see *Ephesiaca*’s shortcomings as indicating that it is an epitome: because of “its brevity, the choppy pace, the general paucity of artistic expression and elaboration, the lack of motivation for certain events, the often abrupt introduction of characters or places, and even the lack of consistent divine providence.” (Kathryn Chew, “Focalization in Xenophon of Ephesus’ *Ephesiaca*,” in *Ancient fiction and early Christian narrative*, (SBL symposium series) Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1998, 47.) By contrast Chew sees these as being attributable to changes in focalisation. (“Focalization,” 56).

modate the soul-searching soliloquies which abound in other Greek romances...³⁶

While Mark has often been considered to be related from the perspective of an omniscient narrator, and thus with zero focalisation, an alternative view could be taken that the Markan prologue (Mark 1:1–17) has zero focalisation but the remainder of the Gospel indicates variable focalisation. Often there is zero focalisation, with the narrative revealing the perspective of the omniscient third-person narrator; at other times, perhaps, the narrative is from the perspective of another character—mainly Jesus—at least until the commencement of the passion narrative, and in the empty-tomb narrative the narrative appears to be focalised through the women.³⁷ Thus, the description of the Baptizer in Mark 1 (with zero focalisation) is more extensive than that of other characters as they appear in the internally focalised sections.

After the prologue, the narrative then provides rapid and minimal introductions of one character or another, with the 'action' lurching from character to character—each relating in some brief way to the central character of Jesus. The overall impression received is that of a 'breathless' feel to the narrative (the frequent use of εὐθύς adds to this impression), and this is very similar to the impression received when reading *Ephesiaca*. The choppy pace and uneven texture of *Ephesiaca*, as noted by Chew as attributable to changes in focalisation, can also be noted in Mark's Gospel—especially in the earlier section.

In this passage, then, focalisation appears to be occurring: since Jesus and his disciples are absent, the narration tends to follow Herod's perspective. With such focalisation, it is not surprising that there is minimal description of characters, since it is the interindividual interactions with Herod—including with Herod's thoughts—that comprise the main emphasis in the passage.

At second-level dialogue, the intrusion of the four γάρ- clauses providing explanatory material, is an authorial device to provide the hearing-reader with matters for judgement via a reliable narrator; this pattern is evident throughout the Gospel, and indicates points where

³⁶ Chew, "Focalization," 52.

³⁷ The exceptions to this occur with Mark's explanatory γάρ clauses, which provide the hearing-reader with information not immediately accessible to the characters; these clauses form the basis for the dialogue occurring directly between author and hearing-reader, compared with indirect dialogue which is transmuted through the character-voices in the text.

focalisation may be ‘interrupted’ by these narratorial remarks. The first of these (Mark 6:14) provides the background to this dialogue taking place between Herod and various other ‘voices’ concerning Jesus’ identity: *φανερὸν γὰρ ἐγένετο τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ*.

While Jesus’ name is not expressly stated, he is the subject of the controversy, as the device of intercalating this pericope into the account of the disciples’ mission activity makes clear. At first-level dialogue, this has provided the motivation for the character Herod to consider the nature of Jesus’ identity. However, at second-level it provides the hearing-reader with clues to unpleasant future implications for Jesus: the secrecy motif has, until now, presented most of the comments about Jesus’ identity in comparative privacy.

The Baptizer

The connection of Jesus with John the Baptizer reintroduces the latter to the narrative after his arrest in Mark 1:14. His character remains minimally drawn: apart from the description in Mark 1, he is essentially portrayed as a voice³⁸ that has cried a message of judgement/repentance/preparation that continues here. With comparatively little direct description in this passage other than that he was a holy and just man, John’s role is to draw Herod to the threshold; he does this with the repeated admonition concerning Herod’s marriage.³⁹ That Herodias is unsuccessful (at least at first) in having John killed, is indicative of ongoing dialogic interaction occurring between the two men. The implication is that John must have engaged Herod in other

³⁸ A designation of which Bakhtin would thoroughly approve (since a character is a point of intersection of sets of ‘voices’ in the text). Some of those ‘voices’ include the prophetic ‘voices’ from the past including the references in Mark 1 to Isaiah and Malachi, and the voicing of specific literary dialogue with the character of Elijah in 1 Kings.

³⁹ Jean Delorme (“John the Baptist’s head—the word perverted: a reading of a narrative (Mark 6:14–29),” *Semeia* 81, 1998, 115–129) maintains that from Mark 6:17–29 the characters relate to each other through a chiasmic structure of internal relationships. His structure is helpful in application to interindividual character, as follows:

- a John arrested and imprisoned by Herod because of his word (v17a)
- b Herodias against John (17b–19)
- c Herod and John (20)
- d Herod, his guests and the girl (21–23)
- e the girl and her mother (24)
- d’ the girl, Herod and his guests (25–26)
- c’ Herod and John’s head (27)
- b’ Herodias obtains John’s head (28)
- a’ John’s body buried by his disciples (29)

dialogue—especially since Herod heard him gladly and responded: καὶ ἀκούσας αὐτοῦ πολλὰ ἠπόρει, καὶ ἡδέως αὐτοῦ ἤκουεν (Mark 6:20). John has clearly not been successful in having Herod cross the threshold into faith as a result of this dialogic interaction; Herod's authorisation of John's murder, and the implications for the fate of Jesus, are indications of this failure.

The hearing-reader realises, however, that John's 'final word' to Herod is a word-with-a-loophole: while it appears to be a final word (although arguably Herod has the final word by having him beheaded!), the activity of the disciples has caused Herod's conscience to see Jesus as John *redivivus*: John's word clearly cannot be finalised, since it is a word from God. The hearing-reader is invited to consider the likelihood that Herod would gladly silence this 'voice' echoing from the past!

John as a character-zone cannot be considered to be 'minor', however, despite the few appearances he makes in the story, or the small number of direct references to him. Mark shows the Baptizer as a reliable character, reinforcing the central dynamic of the Gospel. Furthermore, the hearing-reader already has had a significant description of John in Mark 1, some details of which need to be recalled here.

The portrayal of John as a fearless prophet also requires an understanding of the carnivalesque overlay to appreciate how the character of the Baptizer functions in the text. The condemnation by the Baptizer has been seen to function as fearless word, which is admired by others.⁴⁰ But although fearless, it also reflects a carnival element whereby John the carnival fool can say what he wishes to the king.

The Levitical stipulations that John reiterates in his denunciation of the king are:⁴¹

You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness. (Leviticus 18:16).

If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless. (Leviticus 20:21).

⁴⁰ Marcus (*Mark*, 395) indicates that "John's fearless denunciation of Herod would be seen as an expression of *parrēsia*, boldness of speech, one of the most revered virtues in the hierarchical and often repressive Hellenistic world."

⁴¹ John Painter (*Mark's Gospel: worlds in conflict*, London: Routledge, 1997, 102) suggests that Herodias had not been divorced by her husband and therefore should not have remarried.

The situation becomes somewhat difficult, however, in light of the teaching on Levirate marriage in Deuteronomy 25:5–6.⁴² The fact that there are contrasting stipulations enhances the capacity for third-level dialogue among texts. This will occur co-textually at other points within the Gospel (for example at Mark 12:18–23), and demonstrates, as David Bruce Taylor rightly notes, the deliberate creation of the apparent contradiction within the text of Mark itself.⁴³

At the level of the carnivalesque, the character of the Baptizer has considerable interest. Although now arrested, he appeared in the wilderness—a place outside the boundaries, as the ‘home’ of unclean spirits.⁴⁴ The description (Mark 1:6) of John’s clothing and diet introduces him as a prophet whose self-identity is at the margins of society. However, there are also elements of carnival here: both John’s clothing and diet are bizarre; his word is as uncompromising as the hearing-reader would expect from one who dresses and dines in such an austere manner! Like Jesus, John is shown to cross purity boundaries by emerging from the wilderness-as-outside and eating bizarre food. Even though John is at the margins of society, however, the author reveals his moral steadfastness as John speaks out against Herod and Herodias.

The introduction of John the Baptizer (Mark 1:4) is in turn prefaced with the reference to Isaiah/Malachi (Mark 1:2–3), which stresses the forerunner/Elijah nature of John’s ministry. A third-level dialogue takes

⁴² “When brothers reside together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her, taking her in marriage, and performing the duty of a husband’s brother to her, and the firstborn whom she bears shall succeed to the name of the deceased brother, so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel” (Deuteronomy 25:5–6).

⁴³ David Bruce Taylor, *Mark’s gospel as literature and history*, London: SCM, 1992, 165. Taylor notes that “[w]hen Mark makes John tell Herod, ‘It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife’, he undoubtedly has the passage from Leviticus in mind. But when... he makes the Sadducees tease Jesus with a question to show how absurd the idea of resurrection from the dead is, he there has in mind the passage from Deuteronomy.”

⁴⁴ The wilderness is the necessary setting for the introduction of John—and indeed also of Jesus himself—as evidenced by the way in which Mark changes the Isaianic reference so that it is the voice crying in the wilderness, rather than the wilderness being the location for the preparation of the way of the Lord (Mark 1:2–3). Wilderness as a setting connects Jesus with Moses, in that Israel’s deliverer came from ‘outside’ in the wilderness after forty years with Jethro. Jesus, as new Moses, will come as the new deliverer from ‘outside’ in the wilderness after forty days temptation. Wilderness becomes a critical threshold ‘at the edge of the world’, which will be counterbalanced in Mark with a corresponding threshold ‘at the edge of the world’—the empty tomb.

place here with these intertextual references: no explicit reference is made to the Malachi reference, but the implication is of a comparison of John to Elijah, as evidenced by the description of John's clothing which recalls that of Elijah (2 Kings 1:8).

Third-level dialogue with Graeco-Roman 'romance' texts may be less apparent in relation to John as a character. At the level of vocabulary, *Callirhoe* uses ἐγειρομένης for the apparently dead Callirhoe (*Callirhoe* 1.8.1), compared with Mark's use of ἐγγήγερται to describe Herod's worst fear: the return of the apparently dead John the Baptist (Mark 6:14,16). However, the latter clarifies with the stipulation that Herod sees John as raised ἐκ νεκρῶν; Chariton makes clear that Callirhoe is raised ἐξ ὕπνου. There are, however, similar expressions in *Callirhoe* to the Markan phrase indicating that Herod listened gladly to John the Baptist—ἡδέως αὐτοῦ ἤκουεν (Mark 6:20).⁴⁵ Clearly 'glad hearing' is part of the story-teller's art in an oral culture.

Unlike the later Gospels, Mark does not directly connect the ministry of John and Jesus, but shows it in a tandem relationship. Despite the demise of the Baptizer as described in this pericope, the 'voice' of John/Elijah continues in the text, resurfacing at the Caesarea Philippi profession by Peter (Mark 8:28), the Transfiguration (Mark 9:4–5), the discussion concerning Elijah's role (including Jesus' Elijah/John identification at Mark 9:9–13), and in the confusion of bystanders concerning the cry of dereliction (Mark 15:34–36). Moreover, the connections between the death and burial of John (Mark 6:29) and that of Jesus (Mark 15:42–47)⁴⁶ will ensure that the hearing-reader returns to the threshold 'outside',⁴⁷ thus giving John's character a permanent unfinalisability.

⁴⁵ For example: "ἡδέως ἤκουσε τῆς γυναικός" (*Callirhoe* 2.1.5); "ἡδέως ἡ Καλλιρόη τοῦτο ἤκουσεν" (*Callirhoe* 5.9.4); and in a similar form: "ἀσμένη τοῦτο ἤκουσεν ἡ Στάτειρα" (*Callirhoe* 5.9.2); and "ἀσμένως ἤκουσε Φαρνάκης τῶν λόγων τάχα μὲν καὶ διὰ Μιθριδάτη" (*Callirhoe* 4.6.2).

⁴⁶ Gundry (*Mark*, 312) questions the likelihood of the Baptizer's death as being an intentional preview of Jesus' death on the author's part, despite Gundry's noting of several points of comparison, including vocabulary: κρατέω (Mark 6:17; cf. Mark 14:46), εὐκαίρου (Mark 6:21) cf. εὐκαίρως (Mark 14:11). Third-level dialogue can occur, however, irrespective of the author's intentions.

⁴⁷ The 'outside' thresholds of wilderness and tomb occur at the start and end of the Gospel, and emphasise the 'edge of the world' at which one is drawn into dialogue with Jesus and called to respond: either to the divine voice affirming Jesus' identity; or the angelic voice calling the would-be disciple back to Galilee to where Jesus is waiting.

Herod

Herod, by contrast, enters the text without warning, and disappears almost as quickly.⁴⁸ With John the Baptist (and Pilate in the Passion narrative), Herod is one of the characters that connects the narrative with extratextual reality. However, the connection is an uneasy one, with several of the details in the Gospel varying significantly from other witnesses such as Josephus.⁴⁹ Herod is referred to as king (ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρώδης) rather than tetrarch (ὁ Ἡρώδης ὁ τετραάρχης) as in Luke 3:19, for a variety of reasons.⁵⁰ Popular custom may have been to refer to him as such, but Mark's usage is ironic, and carnivalesque; it also establishes intertextual referents to several kings from the past—King David, King Ahab and also King Ahaseuras—which will serve the narrative. In the case of King David, the king responds positively to Nathan's fearless condemnation of his adultery with Bathsheba. John corresponds to Nathan in his fearless prophetic word; but Herod-as-King is contrasted negatively with David-as-King: there is no corresponding repentance in the threshold encounter, and Herod-as-King remains in impotent perplexity because he refuses to cross the threshold. The intertextual dialogue between King Herod and King Ahab creates a strong correspondence among several of the characters. Ahab-as-King is subject to the intrigues of Jezebel, and it is she who is the arch-enemy of Elijah. She seeks the prophet's death, and is the active protagonist (and sometimes antagonist!) of the pair,⁵¹ while Ahab remains wary of Elijah and is often passive (and sometimes pouting!) in his relationship to others. Herod-as-King is similarly embroiled in Herodias' intrigues against the Baptizer. John's 'status' as Elijah has already been established earlier in the Gospel; now Herodias is shown as the Jezebel-character who is John-Elijah's arch-enemy and seeks his death. The intertextual dialogue with King Ahaseuras-Esther creates a direct comparison here.⁵² In one of the early banquets,⁵³ the former

⁴⁸ Herod Antipas, (4 BCE–39 CE) tetrarch of Galilee and the Transjordan (Perea) after the death of Herod the Great.

⁴⁹ Anderson (*Mark*, 166) refers to the discrepancies between Josephus and the Marcan record.

⁵⁰ The reference is being taken as intentional rather than an error of Mark's part.

⁵¹ For example in the story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21). For the Jezebel typing, see also Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 198; France, *Mark*, 257; van Iersel, *Mark*, 221.

⁵² This connection is noted by Marcus, (*Mark*, 401–402).

⁵³ Referred to in the late Midrashic version of Esther 1:19,21, and further implied at 4:9,11.

queen's severed head is presented on a platter, because Vashti had displeased the king. While gender and position in life have been changed, there is close correspondence with the Baptizer's severed head being presented on a platter, because he had displeased the queen. Both the κοράσιον-Esther and the κοράσιον-Salome dance for the king, who is pleased (and aroused) by the dance and makes lavish promises to her, including up to half of his kingdom.⁵⁴ Herod's pleasure corresponds to that of Ahaseuras—even to the word used in both accounts (ἤρεσεν from ἀρέσκω—Mark 6:22, Esther 2:9)—thus emphasising the likely sexual connotations of the Herod-Salome exchange, not least because the king's pleasure in Esther results in passionate love (ἡρώσθη) by Esther (Esther 2:17).⁵⁵

If the reference to Herod as a 'king' has more to do with intertextual dialogue than with reality, another point of tension between the Markan account and the extra-textual 'historical' reality is that Herod's motivation for the execution of the Baptizer is markedly different in Josephus from that of the Gospel.⁵⁶ Josephus has the execution take place at Machaerus, situated above the Dead Sea, for overtly political

⁵⁴ An interesting parallel exists with another carnival banquet—in this case that of Trimalchio in *Petronii Satiricon*. A pretty lad enters, performs (in this case poetry), and is granted freedom by Trimalchio. The lad immediately snatches the cap from the head of the boar that is the main dish, and places it on his own head. (*Petronii Satiricon*, XLI, from www.thelatinlibrary.com/petronius.html: "Dum haec loquimur, puer speciosus, vitibus hederisque redimitus, modo Bromium, interdum Lyaeum Euhiumque confessus, calathisco uvas circumtulit, et poemata domini sui acutissima voce traduxit. Ad quem sonum conversus Trimalchio: 'Dionyse, inquit, liber esto.' Puer detraxit pileum apro capitique suo imposuit.")

⁵⁵ See Marcus (*Mark*, 396) for a discussion of the sexual and self-indulgent nature of Herod's response to the dance; contra Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 199) who maintain that it "does not suggest sexual overtones."

⁵⁶ Marcus, (*Mark*, 400) notes that Josephus' account appears more historically accurate, describing Mark's account as "gossipy and sensational, like a contemporary soap opera or the outpourings of the tabloid press, whereas the atmosphere of cold political calculation in Josephus is intrinsically more credible." However, if Mark's primary generic influence shaping his 'genre-memory' is that of Graeco-Roman romances, it is to be expected that the style would be like this. Josephus' account is not necessarily more credible based purely on matters of style. Guelich (*Mark*, 331–334) seeks to harmonise Mark and Josephus. Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 197) note the absence of the overtly political motive in Mark, but maintain "there is no absolute contradiction between Josephus and Mark." Myers (*Binding the strong man*, 215) provides an insightful reminder that "the point of the Markan narrative is ideological, not documentary... [and] the exact historical character of the Baptist's charge against Herod is unclear from the narrative."

reasons.⁵⁷ Outside of this pericope in Mark, Herod is referred to twice: once in Mark 3:6, although it is his supporters (τῶν Ἡρῳδιανῶν) who are mentioned; the other is in Jesus' cryptic warning to the disciples in Mark 8:15. There appears to be some question concerning 'King' Herod and some of the people and events alluded to in Mark, by comparison with Josephus' report. There does not appear to be much dialogue between Mark's Gospel and Josephus' works, and if the latter is 'privileged' in terms of historical reliability,⁵⁸ then Mark's account concerning Herod and the Baptizer's imprisonment appears to relate more to folklore. Some scholars have taken this to indicate the 'folkloric' or fictional nature of this narrative,⁵⁹ although others have sought to reconcile Mark with Josephus.⁶⁰ Even if Josephus is privileged over Mark in terms of historical accuracy, and whether or not it is possible to reconcile the two, the significant issue for interpretation/exegesis is what Mark has done with the characters and the threshold encounters established between them.⁶¹

The explanatory γάρ clause at the start of Mark 6:17 indicates the narratorial 'voice' providing the hearing-reader with information that has been perplexingly absent since Mark 1:14. The motivation for John's arrest, or the identity of the person who had orchestrated it, have been withheld, creating the narrative tension at Mark 1:14 (Μετὰ

⁵⁷ *Antiquitates Judaicae* 18.116–18.119 “Τισὶ δὲ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐδόκει ὀλωλέναι τὸν Ἡρώδου στρατὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ μάλα δικαίως τινυμένου κατὰ ποινὴν Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἐπικαλουμένου βαπτιστοῦ. Κτείνει γὰρ δὴ τοῦτον Ἡρώδης ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα καὶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις κελεύοντα ἀρετὴν ἐπασκοῦσιν καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἀλλήλους δικαιοσύνη καὶ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβεῖα χρωμένοις βαπτισμῷ συνιέναι... καὶ τῶν ἄλλων συστρεφόμενων, καὶ γὰρ ἤσθησαν ἐπὶ πλείστον τῇ ἀκροάσει τῶν λόγων, δείσας Ἡρώδης τὸ ἐπὶ τοσόνδε πιθανὸν αὐτοῦ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις μὴ ἐπὶ ἀποστάσει τινὶ φέροι, πάντα γὰρ ἐώκεσαν συμβουλῇ τῇ ἐκείνου πράζοντες, πολλὸν κρεῖττον ἡγεῖται πρὶν τι νεώτερον ἐξ αὐτοῦ γενέσθαι προλαβὼν ἀνελεῖν τοῦ μεταβολῆς γενομένης [μὴ] εἰς πράγματα ἐμπεσὼν μετανοεῖν. καὶ ὁ μὲν ἀποψία τῇ Ἡρώδου δέσμιος εἰς τὸν Μαχαιροῦντα πεμφθεὶς τὸ προειρημένον φρούριον αὐτῇ κτίννυται.”

⁵⁸ Camille Focant (“La tête du prophète sur un plat, ou, L’anti-repas d’alliance (Mc 6:14–29),” *New Testament Studies* 46, 2001, 334) would certainly so privilege Josephus, although her focus is elsewhere: “La comparaison entre les deux textes n’a guère été abordée que dans une perspective historique, l’avantage étant pratiquement toujours donné à Flavius Josèphe.”

⁵⁹ Including David Bruce Taylor, *Mark’s gospel*, 162–168; Marcus, *Mark*, 400; Eduard Schweizer, *The good news according to Mark*, Richmond: John Knox, 1970, 133; Moloney (*Mark*, 127) perceptively notes that “christological issues raised in vv. 14–16 lie hidden underneath the folkloric narrative of vv. 17–29.”

⁶⁰ For example Lane, *Mark*, 216–223.

⁶¹ For discussion of the different views, and a possible ‘resolution’, see Guelich’s discussion (*Mark*, 326–9).

δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην). The motive is now shown to relate to both Herodias, and John's criticism of Herod's marriage to her. Herod is shown to be both fearful and boastful, and is therefore readily swayed by other's opinions: not only in the opening verses, but also in his protection of John (Mark 6:20), and in carrying out his oaths to Herodias' daughter (Mark 6:26): διὰ τοὺς ὅρκους καὶ τοὺς ἀνακειμένους οὐκ ἠθέλησεν ἀθετῆσαι αὐτήν. Herod may be King Ahab to John's Elijah,⁶² revealing similar weaknesses, but to the hearing-reader on re-reading Mark, the author has also indicated some correspondences between Herod's ambivalence leading to John's death, and Pilate's ambivalence leading to Jesus' death.⁶³ However, even on first reading, the character of Herod provides proleptic clues to the hearing-reader of Jesus' likely fate.

The occasion of Herod's birthday has a potential carnivalesque element in the use of γενεσίους, since in Attic Greek γενέλθια was used for 'birthday', and γενέσια represented the celebration of the birthday of the dead.⁶⁴ *Callirhoe* includes the reference τὰ δὲ περὶ Καλλιρόην δεινότεραν ἄλλην ἐλάμβανε παλιγγενεσίαν, καὶ τιнос ἀφέσεως ταῖς ἀπολειφθείσαις ἀναπνοαῖς ἐκ τῆς ἀσιτίας ἐγγενομένης (*Callirhoe* 1.8.1) in which παλιγγενεσίαν refers to returning to life despite her having stopped breathing, with her return to life being prompted by lack of food. The carnivalesque motifs of death-rebirth and food-eating are clearly linked here. While γενέσια has clearly come to represent both understandings of 'birthday' and 'birthday-of-the-dead', the carnivalesque echoes are apparent—especially in what transpires with the death of the Baptizer—setting up the death-rebirth element within the text, and connecting it with the eating series.

⁶² Although Gundry (*Mark*, 313) discounts this correspondence, citing several points of dissimilarity. That there are differences does not, however, exclude the possibility of intertextual dialogue between the interindividual characters of the Baptizer-Herod and Elijah-Ahab.

⁶³ Herod's desire to protect John (6:20), and Pilate's questions (15:4–5, 9, 14) indicating a favourable disposition to Jesus; Herod's oath at the feast (6:22–23), and Pilate's festival custom of releasing a prisoner (15:6–9); Herod's regard for his oaths and his guests, and Pilate's desire to satisfy the crowd (15:15).

⁶⁴ Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 198) observe helpfully that "the overtones of the term tell Mark's readers that Herod's 'birthday' will always be commemorated as the day on which John died."

The sharing of food is an important element of the carnivalesque; here the banquet shows strong evidence of carnival tendencies.⁶⁵ Bakhtin draws a distinction between official feasts (which only reinforce the existing order and which are monolithically serious), and carnival banquets, which had regenerative power because they subvert the existing order. Bakhtin comments that

...through all the stages of historic development feasts were linked to moments of crisis, of breaking points in the cycle of nature or in the life of society... Moments of death and revival, of change and renewal always led to a festive perception of the world.⁶⁶

Herod's banquet, initially at least, is an official feast—a gaudy display of Herod's wealth for those who hold governmental, military or commercial power. This changes when the daughter dances, however, and the banquet then functions 'subversively' since the normally 'powerful' king becomes powerless at the hands of the normally powerless women. Further consideration of Herod needs to occur in relation to these two women.

Herodias—the daughter—Herod

Herodias is shown to be the evil genius plotting John's death.⁶⁷ She seizes the opportune time (ἡμέρας εὐκαίρου Mark 6:21) of the feast to secure her plan. The choice of εὐκαίρου also establishes third-level (co-textual) dialogue with the other principal 'villain' of Mark's Gospel: Judas also seeks the εὐκαίρως to betray Jesus (Mark 14:11). Herodias' motive, as already indicated, has been John's condemnation of her marriage to Herod. The ambivalence introduced here by the contrasting

⁶⁵ Eating and drinking series are often intertwined, and often the images associated with them—different forms of food or drink—become associated with religious motifs. Herod's banquet functions also as a contrast with the desert feedings that occur subsequently at Mark 6:35–44, and Mark 8:1–9. France (*Mark*, 255) comments: "The degenerative nature of Antipas' splendid banquet contrasts vividly with the wholesome simplicity of the very different feast which will follow next in Mark's narrative." At the level of the narrative, there is an ironic twist involved with having a simple feeding that benefits many and is life-affirming, coming immediately after an analeptic account of a carnival banquet with its grotesque elements that proves ultimately death-delivering.

⁶⁶ *RW*, 9.

⁶⁷ M.A. Tolbert ("Mark," in C. Newsom and S. Ringe (eds.), *The women's Bible commentary*, 272) comments perceptively: "More than Herod or Pilate, Herodias stands with the high priests and Jerusalem religious leaders as the epitome of evil for the Gospel of Mark. That a woman occupies that ignominious position as well as men suggests some caution in evaluating the overall role of women in the Gospel."

Levitical provisions (see earlier discussion) provides the opportunity for the hearing-reader to be troubled by the text as it stands in relation to the Herodias-John dialogical interaction.

A concern of many commentators has related to the nature of the dance by the daughter, which ultimately results in John's death. Has the (virginal) stepdaughter of Herod been trained in the art of voluptuous dancing? Given the reputation of Herod's household, the dance seems to have had an effect of sexual arousal on the part of the guests and Herod. The intertextual connection with the Esther story (where the king also makes an extravagant promise) would suggest that Herod's boastful promise has overt sexual meaning.⁶⁸

Thus, the incestuous nature of Herod's marriage to his brother's wife is now further complicated by an implied incestuous connection between Herod and his step-daughter.⁶⁹ This provides a reason why the innocent girl suddenly becomes transformed, becoming complicit in a bizarre request that suggests the girl's own malice. Realising the implied sexual overture from her father, she now readily seeks her mother's advice (Mark 6:24). Dialogue with Herod now prompts dialogue with her mother. The daughter of Herodias then responds to a minimally narrated dialogic encounter with Herodias,⁷⁰ and initiates a dialogic encounter with Herod which will result in John's beheading (Mark 6:25). The request that she makes to Herod—an enhanced version of Herodias' suggestion—is the daughter's means of symbolically castrating her father in front of the guests for his symbolic sexual penetration of her. That she returned μετὰ σπουδῆς is essential if she is to force Herod to honour his boast in front of his guests. Only if she is able to make herself repugnant to Herod (by forcing John's death in this bizarre manner) can she safeguard herself from her father's sexual advances. Even if she is unsuccessful in this ploy, she now also has a vested interest in ensuring the Baptizer is silenced: should her father force an incestuous relationship with her, she will be able to avoid the ignominy that

⁶⁸ Marcus (*Mark*, 401) notes that "Herod's lecherous impatience is underlined by the asyndeton... of his speech to the girl in 6:22b and by the repetition and expansion of his promise to her in 6:23."

⁶⁹ The Levitical prohibitions of Leviticus 18 are silent on the matter of marriage of an uncle to a niece. Given that Herodias' daughter is both Herod's step-daughter and also his niece and great-niece, the possibility of such a union would not be beyond possibility.

⁷⁰ It is to be expected that the dialogue with Herodias would be minimally narrated if this pericope is primarily focalised from Herod's point of view.

her mother has probably endured throughout the household because of John's continuing condemnation. Herod, having been forced to the threshold by the daughter, responds by trading the head (= honour) of the Baptizer to retain his own honour. Herod is forced to carry out the grisly task without delay, since to refuse or delay would be to shame himself in front of his guests (Mark 6:26). Therefore, he immediately despatches his bodyguard to carry out the deed (Mark 6:27).

Third-level dialogue is also evident here: the difference in the use of εὐθύς here in this narrative (so comparatively prevalent in previous pericopae), and the generally slower pace of the narrative, indicates a change from the adventure chronotope of Mark 1:9–6:13. The occurrence of εὐθύς at Mark 6:27 serves a different function from the typical Markan usage: whereas usually it is an indeterminate temporal marker that may serve the function of alerting the hearing-reader to an impending threshold encounter, here it indicates the *response* of Herod to the dancing daughter's request. Instead of breaking his foolish oath, or delaying its implementation, he orders John's execution *immediately*. Clearly εὐθύς is indicative of intent and motivation in this instance, and therefore indicative of a threshold response (but at first-level dialogue): Herod is aware of John's challenges to him but has kept him in prison, and now does nothing to protect him. Herod crystallises here his refusal to cross the threshold to which John has called him.

Third-level dialogue is also indicated in various inter-textual references. Having already established John in the prologue as an Elijah figure, his reintroduction follows immediately after the references to Jesus as John *redivivus* and as Elijah. The hearing-reader is therefore invited to extend the Elijah-typology by noting the intertextual dialogue that has cast Herod as King Ahab, and now here, to see Herodias as Jezebel.⁷¹

Another third-level dialogue occurs with the text of Esther. The first banquet (Esther 1:2–4) has the officials and ministers, the army, and the nobles and governors, and compares closely with Mark 6:21—his court nobles (τοῖς μεγιστᾶσιν αὐτοῦ); army officers (τοῖς χιλιάρχοις); and leading men of Galilee (τοῖς πρώτοις τῆς Γαλιλαίας). One of the middle banquets in Esther becomes the opportunity for the king

⁷¹ For example, the condemnation by John/Elijah of the marriage of Herod/Ahab to Herodias/Jezebel (Mark 6:18–19/1 Kings 16:31); the unsuccessful attempts by Herodias/Jezebel to eliminate John/Elijah (Mark 6:19/1 Kings 18:11–13; 19:2–9).

to promise half of his kingdom to Esther (Esther 5:6), repeating the offer in Esther 7:2. A further intriguing parallel occurs in the Targums of Esther, where Vashti was ordered to appear before the king in the nude.⁷² She refuses her husband, and he decrees that she should be beheaded.⁷³

Concerning Herod's oaths to the daughter (Mark 6:26): the word (ὅρκους) occurs rarely in the New Testament, and when it does, usually relates to covenantal promise, or prohibition of oaths—occasions which are not implying passion.⁷⁴ The sole exceptions are Peter's denial, and the oaths made by Herod. The verb used to swear his oaths is similarly used elsewhere for covenantal purposes, although this is clearly not the case with Herod. Herod's oaths and swearing of them clearly reflect a passionate intensity.

Similar instances of passionate intensity can be traced in *Callirhoe* (3.2.5), where Dionysius is prepared to climb to heaven and place his hand on Zeus to make his oath: “‘ποίους’ φησὶ ‘θέλεις ὅρκους θεῶν; ἔτοιμος γὰρ ὀμνύναι, εἰ δυνατόν, εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀναβὰς καὶ ἁψάμενος αὐτοῦ τοῦ Διός.’” (*Callirhoe* 3.2.5). *Callirhoe*, however, is prepared to accept that he swear by the sea that brought her, and by Aphrodite and Eros: “‘ὅμοσόν μοι’ φησὶ ‘τὴν θάλασσαν τὴν κομίσασάν με πρὸς σέ καὶ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην τὴν δεῖξασάν μέ σοι καὶ τὸν Ἔρωτα τὸν νυμφαγωγόν’” (*Callirhoe* 3.2.5). The narratorial explanation is that Dionysius' passion was raging: “<Τὸ> μὲν οὖν ἐρωτικὸν πάθος ἔσπενδῃ τε καὶ ἀναβολὴν οὐκ ἐπέτρεπε τοῖς γάμοις· ταμιεύεσθαι γὰρ δύσκολον ἔξουσίαν ἐπιθυμίας” (*Callirhoe* 3.2.6). The rather whimsical additional comment refers to the painfulness of self-control when sexual desire can be satisfied!

In *Ephesiaca*, Habrocomes and Anthia are on board ship when they swear undying marital fidelity to each other despite the oracle that has predicted disaster for them both; and “the occasion made their oaths increasingly awesome”: “ὁ καιρὸς αὐτῶν ἐποίει τοὺς ὅρκους φοβερωτέρους” (*Ephesiaca* 1.11.6). Later in *Ephesiaca*, when the barbarian girl Manto is in day-to-day contact with Habrocomes, she

⁷² The Targum of Rishon chapter 1, and the Targum of Sheni, chapter 1.

⁷³ Only the Targum of Rishon records the beheading.

⁷⁴ Other instances include the reference to God's oath to Abraham in the Magnificat (Luke 1:73); the prohibition of oaths by Jesus (Matt 5:33); Peter's denial (Matt 26:72); reference to God's oath to David (Acts 2:30); passing reference to (covenantal) oaths by humans (Heb 6:16); the prohibition of human oaths in James (5:12).

becomes uncontrollably infatuated with him: “Αὕτη ἡ Μαντὸ ἐκ τῆς συνήθους μετὰ τοῦ Ἀβροκόμου διαίτης ἀλίσκεται καὶ ἀκατασχέτως εἶχε” (*Ephesiaca* 2.3.2). To help satisfy her desire, she enlists the help of Anthia, who she asks on oath not to betray her; Manto confesses her love for Habrocomes, and promises Anthia much if she helps: “καὶ δεῖται μὴ κατεπειν αὐτῆς καὶ ὅρκους λαμβάνει καὶ λέγει τὸν ἔρωτα τοῦ Ἀβροκόμου καὶ ἱκετεύει συλλαβέσθαι καὶ πολλὰ ὑπέσχετο συλλαβομένη” (*Ephesiaca* 2.3.4).

Clearly, from these other examples, it is plausible to claim that Herod’s oaths indicate a state of intense passion, and not merely the effects of a possible drunken state. This is further accentuated by the size of what he is potentially promising—up to half his kingdom, when in reality he is a puppet king and unable to give away what he claims! When these comparisons concerning Herod’s oaths are taken together with the fact that the daughter pleased (ἤρεσεν) Herod and his dinner-guests, the nature of that pleasure—which has raised considerable conjecture, including questions concerning whether the daughter performed naked—can be taken with other indicators as being sexual in nature.

There are parallels in *Callirhoe* where similar usage occurs for ‘pleasure’. In one incident (already noted) Dionysius is aflame with passion, so that he is pleased (ἤρεσε) to make an oath to marry Callirhoe: “ἤρεσε ταῦτα καὶ ταχέως ἐγένετο” (*Callirhoe* 3.2.5). At another point, the King, who has been involved in some erotic imagination concerning Callirhoe, is greatly inflamed with passion: “ἀναπλάττων ἐξεκαίετο σφόδρα” (*Callirhoe* 6.4.7). Therefore, when the King’s trusted servant suggests a way to satisfy the King’s desire, he was pleased, because it suited his desires for pleasure: “ἤρεσεν ὁ λόγος τῷ βασιλεῖ, πρὸς ἡδονὴν γὰρ ἦν” (*Callirhoe* 6.4.8).

Herodias’ daughter reveals an initial naïvete: controlled by her mother, she needs Herodias’ advice as to how to respond to Herod’s benevolent boasting. As previously noted, there is an incongruity concerning the nature of her dancing—probably that of seductress or whore—and her position as a ‘royal’ princess. No motivation is given for the dance, and speculation whether it was Herod’s request, Herodias’ scheming, or the daughter’s choice misses the point. The narrative makes clear that Herodias provides the grounds for the arrest of John (διὰ Ἡρωδιάδα), and that she is behind the personal intrigues within the court concerning John.

The daughter, however, extends her mother's request to include the phrase ἐπὶ πίνακι ('on a platter').⁷⁵ Thereby she has reinforced another carnival element—the association of death/rebirth and eating. When the executioner has obliged, she takes it to her mother as an exotic dish to be eaten. Herodias is symbolically 'satisfied'; the implication in the text is that she eats the Baptizer's head. Certainly there is no mention of the head being reunited with the body when it is collected by John's disciples. The head disappears from the text—but lingers in the imagination of the hearing-reader—just as the Baptizer himself does.

The two women in this passage become the antithesis of the women in Mark 5:21–43.⁷⁶ There, Jairus' daughter (and her mother) were effectively 'embedded' in Jairus; the abject poverty and precarious social position of the haemorrhaging woman is evident in that she is *not* similarly embedded. However, Herodias and her daughter, although technically embedded in Herod, are strong women: they act from official authority (Herodias) or from a 'bestowed' authority given in Herod's boast (the daughter). Both use 'power' to ensure John's death. In Mark 5, Jesus healed both the older and younger woman: the wombs of both now have the potential for birth, even though both wombs were dead before—one by disease, the other by death, as mentioned above. A 'pregnant death' image is evident here. By contrast, Herodias and her daughter are two women who bring about death/castration. Herodias' daughter threatens her family status with lewd dancing; the marginalised woman gains family status and embeddedness when Jesus (uniquely) calls her 'daughter' (Mark 5:34).

Significance of the dialogical 'voices'

Considered from the point of view of each character's 'voice': the minor characters have little if any real 'voice'. Their words are anonymous and subsumed within Herod's 'voice'. John's has been imprisoned, but

⁷⁵ Camery-Hoggart (*Irony*, 145–146) considers the irony that what is on the platter is really "the king's own head, blood-spattered, ghastly, gagging on the monstrosity he has created." This would fit with the picture of Herod 'losing his head' over the girl, then offering up John's head to save his own, contra van Iersel *Mark*, 222.

⁷⁶ Marcus (*Mark*, 403) highlights the contrast between these two women and the women mentioned in Mark 5:24–34 and Mark 7:24–30: "the four women, then, represent heroines of the faith and their demonic counterparts."

is clearly not silenced, despite Herodias' intent. Herod preserves John's 'voice' from Herodias. He receives John's word but is perplexed by it. Herodias has only one 'voice', expressive of her dominant desire. She takes the empty oath of Herod and fills it with murderous intent. Herodias' 'voice' controls Herod's 'voice', just as it controls the 'voice' of the daughter. The daughter's 'voice' is initially innocent ('what shall I ask?'), but also fearful of the intent of Herod's word; thus she seeks her mother's (controlling) 'voice'. When she returns to Herod, her 'voice' is confident, demanding of fulfilment; it is now a castrating 'voice', which both controls her stepfather's 'voice' and executes her mother's enemy, thus silencing John's critical 'voice'. However, the Baptizer's 'voice' is not silenced, as the flashback makes clear: it has come back to life and is evident in the mighty works of Jesus and his disciples. The hearing-reader's 'voice' must now respond to that of the author: since the pericope is both analeptic (returning to events in Mark 1) and proleptic of Jesus' passion, the hearing-reader is called to the threshold to understand that Jesus' 'voice' will also be threatened—yet never silenced—such is the nature of the discipleship to which the hearing-reader is called.

Bakhtin and the Empty Tomb (Mark 16:1–8a)

It may seem unusual to consider the empty tomb out of its normal chronological sequence in the Gospel, yet because the narrative so clearly indicates a threshold chronotope here, and the carnivalesque expression is comic rather than tragic, the passage will be considered at this point—although with clear reference to points under discussion elsewhere. This significance of this passage cannot be overlooked, however, despite the fact that the characters are few. Consideration could be given to characters that might have been expected to appear, yet do not: the significance of such absence has been noted by several scholars.⁷⁷ Only those explicitly present at the level of the narrative plane will be considered, however, at the three different levels of dialogue.

⁷⁷ For example, Weeden (*Traditions*, 50–51): "Mark is assiduously involved in a vendetta against the disciples. He paints them as obtuse, obdurate, recalcitrant men who at first are unperceptive of Jesus' messiahship, then oppose its style and character, and finally totally reject it. As a *coup de grace*, Mark closes his Gospel without rehabilitating the disciples."

Nevertheless, the characterisation occurring here suggests a complexity that could perhaps be missed on the basis of plot considerations, especially if plot were privileged over characterisation. If plot is considered to be secondary to characterisation, however, then the Markan ending is no mere literary contrivance:⁷⁸ instead it is the final dimension of the portrayal of Markan characters as having both followed and failed, and is a classic example of Markan opacity.⁷⁹ Focalisation appears to be evident here: the story is told from the perspective of the women,⁸⁰ with the exception of the narratorial intrusions with typical γάρ clauses: ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα (16:4b) and ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ (16:8). Yet despite the presence of these explanatory clauses, they are not indicative of narratorial omniscience; were it not told from the perspective of the women, it is more likely that there would be further commentary on their motivation, and their subsequent silence.⁸¹

Dialogue with the text

This section contains a significant 'macro-textual issue,' with the significance of the various endings of Mark having been widely canvassed, with almost unanimous support for the proposition that the longer ending(s) of Mark 16:9–20 are not original to the gospel.⁸² Clearly

⁷⁸ Contra Smith (*Lion with wings*, 110), for example, who notes that the empty tomb episode "is not the consequence of the plotted events... The sole end of the plot is unquestionably the death of Jesus on the cross... It [the empty tomb narrative] is certainly no mere afterthought... [but a] device in which the protagonist makes good his escape... not as a result of plotted causality, but by means of literary contrivance."

⁷⁹ Fowler (*Reader* 219): "This episode is a masterpiece of indirection, and although it is the final episode of the Gospel, it is hardly a conclusion. The story and the discourse break off abruptly and dissonantly at 16:8. The fate of the characters is left up in the air... The narratee is therefore also left up in the air, not knowing where to turn, and not receiving clear guidance from either the narrator or the characters. The last episode of the Gospel shrouds everyone and everything behind veils of opacity."

⁸⁰ See also Broadhead, *Mark*, 135.

⁸¹ Moloney (*Mark*, 349–350) comments helpfully: "The ending of the Gospel must be understood in the light of the story as a whole, and especially as a return to the prologue (1:1–13)... The beginning... and the end... addresses the reader... [who] is asked to reassess God's design, outlined in 1:1–13, on arrival at the conclusion of the story of Jesus in 16:1–8."

⁸² The notable exception being W. Farmer, *The last twelve verses of Mark*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974, who also argues against Markan priority. Witherington (*Mark*, 416) following Gundry (*Mark*, 1009–1012); Craig A. Evans, (*Mark 8:27–16:20*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001, 539); and France (*Mark*, 670–674) argue for a lost ending beyond 16:8. By contrast, Norman Petersen ("When is the end not the end? Literary reflections on the ending of Mark's narrative," *Interpretation*

there are difficulties associated with the text as it stands, yet these are not insurmountable if Mark's intention is to end at this point.⁸³ It is intriguing that suspended endings are evident in several ancient Graeco-Roman romances:⁸⁴ despite apparent closure of the narratives, there are instances where "a significant degree of openness is nonetheless achieved."⁸⁵ For example, Petronius has his hero hurl himself off a rock (presumably to his death) at the conclusion of *Petronii Satiricon*. *Callirhoe* is another example of such suspension:

34, 1980, 151–166) argues persuasively for the abrupt ending of Mark and against a possible 'lost' ending; so too Hooker, *St Mark*, 382–388. So also Paul Danove, *The end of Mark's story: a methodological study*, Leiden: Brill, 1993, 119–131; but contra Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 609–610), C.E.B. Cranfield (*Mark*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, 470–471), and Schweizer (*Mark*, 365–367). Anderson (*Mark*, 351–354) summarises the arguments for and against the Gospel ending at 16:8. Moloney (*Mark*, 341) is convinced that 16:8 was the original ending, "and the interpreter must make sense of Mark's literary and theological reasons for closing his Gospel with the fear, flight and silence of the women (16:8)." Marxsen (*Mark*, 72–75), together with Weeden (*Traditions in conflict*, 111–116), Werner Kelber (*The Kingdom in Mark: a new place and a new time*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974, 129–147), Crossan ("Empty tomb and absent Lord (Mark 16:1–8)," in *The Passion in Mark*, ed. Kelber, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1976, 136–152) Norman Perrin, (*The resurrection narratives: a new approach*, London: SPCK, 1977, 17–40), subscribe to an original ending that indicates the Markan community is waiting for an imminent Parousia. (See also Ernest Best, *Disciples and discipleship: studies in the Gospel according to Mark*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986, 72–78; J.D. Kingsbury, *The christology of Mark's Gospel*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983, 25–45; Marcus, *Mark*, 75–79; Ferdinand Belo, *Lecture matérialiste de l'évangile de Marc: récit-pratique-idéologie*, Paris: Cerf, 1974, 237.) Moloney (*Mark*, 342) correctly notes that such a focus on "a community living in the absence of Jesus and waiting for the Parousia, does not do justice to the message of the Gospel as a whole."

⁸³ Moloney (*Mark*, 362) makes the excellent point that "the author [of 16:9–20] has betrayed one of the fundamental purposes of Mark, the original evangelist, whose version of the story of Jesus closed with the fear, flight and silence of the women in 16:8. Rather than ask the *readers of the Gospel* to 'fill the gap' left by the failure of the women in 16:8...he provides all the 'filling' that second-century readers might have wanted."

⁸⁴ So especially J. Lee Magness (*Sense and absence: structure and suspension in the ending of Mark's Gospel*, Atlanta, Ga, Scholars Press, 1986). Magness refers to ancient Greek romances, and also to *Vita Apollonii* but could also have found useful supporting material in the ending of Petronius' *Petronii Satiricon*. Magness also dates *Callirhoe* rather late (around 125 CE) compared with the preferred date here. Contra France (*Mark*, 671), who questions the comparison with Greek tragedy, epic or romance, and believes that the degree of 'jolt' occasioned in Mark is significantly greater than in such works.

⁸⁵ Magness, *Sense and structure*, 42. Magness also notes (46) "[t]he temptation to add to open-ended works...is but a symptom of the attraction of the suspended ending and the ability of readers to supply mental closure."

the private reunion for which the lovers (and the readers) have been longing is not narrated. Callirhoe's closing prayer impels the reader into the near and distant future.⁸⁶

At the level of 'micro-textual issues' the inclusion of the names of the women (Mark 16:1) is widely attested in most of the textual witnesses, and certainly fits with the Markan pattern of naming characters who are to be less positively viewed.⁸⁷ The specific reference to the time of day is strongly supported by most text witnesses, and is an indicative marker of a threshold being established. Throughout much of Mark, time-references are less determinate, and representative of different chronotopic elements; here, however, the clearer mark of time suggests the chronotope of threshold.

Character-zones

The young man

Two significant speech-utterances are evident in this passage: the question among the women concerning the stone (ἔλεγον Mark 16:3) and the command from the young man (λέγει... ἴδε... ὑπάγετε (Mark 16:6–7)). As the former is more a verbalisation of inner speech shared within the character-zone of the women, the second speech-utterance will be considered first. The identity of the young man is curious—as also is the identity of the young man who fled in Gethsemane.⁸⁸ His

⁸⁶ Magness, *Sense and structure*, 43. See also Tomas Hägg, *The novel in antiquity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, 216. Magness (*Sense and structure*, 43–44) also considers that the comparative closure evident in *Ephesiaca* "indicates that the more open endings of some of the other romances were deliberate and voluntary choices of literary technique within the genre."

⁸⁷ For example, Tolbert (*Sowing* 274, 292–293) notes perceptively that the positive images of women in Mark are linked with anonymous characters, whereas the women who come to the tomb are all named, perhaps suggesting that they were prominent. She asks whether this naming may be a criticism of "the human desire for fame, glory, status and authority" (292–293).

⁸⁸ Fowler rightly notes that the "*neaniskos* puzzles in Mark remain a mystery." ("Reader-response," 78). "Mark's Gospel is comfortable with offering its reader an abundance of irony, ambiguity, and mystery." (Fowler, "Reader," 78) Gundry (*Mark*, 999–1000) canvasses various possible identifications of the young man, including that it is the women who have mistaken an angel for a young man, but he finally dismisses such possibilities. He notes (*Mark*, 990) that the young man is positioned on the right side, and considers that this "makes the young man represent Jesus, who at the time of Mark's writing is sitting on the right hand of God." Edwards (*Mark*, 493), Evans (*Mark*, 536), and France (*Mark*, 675–676), insist that the young man was an angel, and

white robe contrasts with the linen cloths used for Jesus' body, and has other echoes of the Transfiguration. The young man is the central character in this story, even though the narrative is focalised from the perspective of the women.⁸⁹ He draws the women to the threshold and engages in a dialogic interaction with them concerning not only Jesus' identity but also what is required of the women in response. In a sense, at first-level dialogue, he functions as a continuation of the divine 'voice' that announces Jesus' identity at the Baptism and the Transfiguration; here the young man provides the women with the final indication of Jesus' identity: the Crucified One has been raised.⁹⁰

At second-level dialogue, however, the possibility exists that no matter how else the young man might have been presented in the other canonical gospels,⁹¹ he also functions at a purely narrative level in Mark as the antithesis of the young man as 'author' or 'ideal reader' in Gethsemane (see further the discussion in chapter 5): just as it is impossible for any disciple—including the author or the 'ideal reader'—to have remained with Jesus before the resurrection, it is only possible now after the resurrection for the author to point the way back to true discipleship. The young man's invitation to the women to see where they laid him (Mark 16:6b), functions at second-level dialogue to invite the hearing-reader

Witherington (*Mark*, 414) calls 16:6 an angelophany; but in doing so they miss the deliberate opacity evident in the text. A. Van Hoya ("La fuite du jeune homme nu (Mc 14,51–52)" *Bib* 52, 1971, 404) sees a counterpoint between humiliation and exaltation in the young man who fled in Gethsemane and the young man in the tomb. So also Wactjen (*Reordering of Power*, 218), who sees it also as a baptismal allegory in the exchange of old clothes for new. Moloney (*Mark*, 345) notes that verbal links with the earlier passage (Mark 14:51–52) cannot be dismissed. "No doubt the primary meaning of the text is that the women encounter a heavenly figure in an empty tomb, and this figure announces the Easter message to them (v. 6). However, it also contains a hint that the disciples, whose flight and fear have been conveyed in the parable of the young man who fled naked in 14:51–52, have not been dismissed from the story... As God has transformed the death of Jesus by raising him from the dead, discipleship may be reestablished and nakedness covered... The case must not be overstated, as the function of the young man is not to act as a symbol of 'restored discipleship,' but a hint that God's action can reverse failure."

⁸⁹ Broadhead (*Mark*, 135) notes the movement to the tomb that results in a confrontation with the young man; movement away is a response to his message, and therefore his message stands as the centrepiece.

⁹⁰ The reference to being raised is a significant difficulty for those who consider this an assumption narrative, as Smith rightly notes in his discussion of the different views concerning assumption and Mark ("Revisiting," 130–134).

⁹¹ Matthew explicitly refers to him as an angel (Matt 28:2); Luke makes him into *two* men in white and changes the Galilee message (Luke 24:4); John eliminates him from the narrative altogether (John 20:1–10).

to hear the antithesis of the cry of dereliction. Whatever the hearing-reader may have envisaged concerning the level of abandonment of Jesus' 'voice' in the text by the divine 'voice,' has been reversed by the divine 'voice'—reaccentuated through the young man's 'voice'—in the vindication/resurrection of Jesus' 'voice' which now calls the disciples to return to the Galilee.⁹² The young man's direction to the women to tell the disciples *and Peter* has been variously understood,⁹³ but most likely functions as a recalling by Jesus' 'voice'—albeit at a distance—to Peter's 'voice' which has fallen silent (in tears) after his denial.

The young man's reference to Jesus as the Nazarene, rather than some other christological title, is intriguing—especially for the hearing-reader. Co-textually, *Ναζαρηνός* is only used on three other occasions in Mark—at each point where some measure of resistance or opposition might be encountered: by an evil spirit (Mark 1:24), as an identifier outside Jericho in Judaea (Mark 10:47) where opposition and impending death are imminent; by the servant-girl in the courtyard (Mark 14:67) during Jesus' trial.⁹⁴ The hearing-reader might therefore conclude that although now raised from death, Jesus' mission still faces potential resistance—in this case from the women whose silence potentially places it in jeopardy. *Ναζαρηνός* is also a pointer back to the commencement of the narrative; together with the indication of the need to return to Galilee, the reference to Nazareth points the women (and even more, the hearing-reader) to the place where discipleship commenced.⁹⁵

⁹² Evans (*Mark*, 537) fancifully considers this invitation to be a response to what he imagines were "looks of disbelief and incomprehension on the faces of the women," although he provides no basis for his claim. Moloney (*Mark*, 346) perceptively observes that the invitation "ἴδε ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκον αὐτόν" at Mark 16:6b answers the cry of desertion asked by Jesus at Mark 15:34. "Jesus has not been forsaken... The opponents of Jesus crucified him, and he has been placed in a tomb. It would appear that they have had their victory, but they have been thwarted. He has been raised, and the existence of Mark's Gospel indicates that there is a community of believers whose coming into being depends upon God's action."

⁹³ Gundry (*Mark*, 1003) has even suggested that, while the other disciples had regrouped, Peter was topographically separate from the others, requiring a separate report!

⁹⁴ See Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 458.

⁹⁵ So Belo, *Lecture matérialiste*, 231–232; but Gundry (*Mark*, 1000) considers the reference to the Nazarene as doubtful in that it is "a lead into the announcement that he is going ahead to Galilee." Myers (*Binding the strong man*, 399–399) perceptively comments that "[t]his 'future' point of reference is the same as the 'past' one: Galilee... where 'the disciples and Peter' were first called, named, sent on a mission, and taught by Jesus. In other words, the disciple/reader is being told that that narrative, which appeared to have ended, is beginning again. The story is circular!"

The women

The role of the women disciples has been variously considered, both in relation to their status and their discipleship.⁹⁶ But the essential ambiguity of the narrative causes significant difficulties for interpretation; for this reason, the characterisation of the women at the tomb has often involved guessing at what happens beyond the narrative. The women come to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body for burial—at least this is their expressed motivation within the narrative. Such motivation is open to question,⁹⁷ yet there appears to be focalisation within the text

⁹⁶ The three basic positions adopted by scholars in relation to the role of the women disciples at the resurrection include an essentially negative position, such as that of Winsome Munro ("Women disciples in Mark?" *CBQ* 44, 1982, 227), who claims that the women "do not seem properly to belong in the public ministry of Jesus." She considers the failure of the women at the resurrection to be evidence of apostasy paralleling that of the Twelve. Similarly, Francis J. Moloney (*Disciples and prophets: biblical models for the religious life*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1980, 151) notes that the verbs used to describe the women's emotional experience are different from that of the men, "but their trembling and astonishment are a representation of the disciples' reactions." The second position is essentially positive toward the women: so Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, (*In memory of her—a feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins*, London: SCM, 1983, 320) who considers that despite the women's fear and flight they also become the proclaimers of the resurrection. The Markan community still experiences fear (in the face of persecution) and is tempted to deny Jesus to avoid suffering. Thus, the women become a model for the faith community to follow despite their fear. Her assumptions move beyond the level of the narrative, however. Claudia Setzer ("Excellent women: female witness to the resurrection," *JBL* 116/2, 1997, 259–272) notes the *habitual* nature of the women's discipleship. Setzer maintains that the discomfort concerning women as disciples "resulted in a partial erasure or muting of the role of the women... [despite] the singular importance and indispensability of Mary Magdalene (and others) to the earliest resurrection story." ("Excellent women," 272). Athol Gill ("Women ministers in the gospel of Mark", *Australian Biblical Review* XXXV, 1987, 18–19) concludes that Mark intended his readers to understand that, despite their initial fear that made them unable to tell anyone else, their faithfulness in following Jesus to the cross and his burial meant that the message of Jesus' resurrection finally reached the Markan church). The third position is essentially 'mixed' in its view of the women: so Elizabeth Struthers Malbon ("Fallible followers: women and men in the Gospel of Mark," *Semeia* 28, 1983, 29–48), who believes the women complement the Markan portrayal of the (male) disciples, constituting a portrait of fallible followers. Malbon indicates that the fear and silence of the women relates to the epiphanic nature of their resurrection-morning encounter. Thus, the reader receives a clear message that anyone can be a follower, but no-one finds it easy. Malbon also argues, however, that only a follower of Jesus could accept and understand the women's story—a story that was ultimately communicated. This is not made explicit, because of the need to challenge the followership of the implied reader. The women follow Jesus after the male disciples abandon him, yet the women are silent and afraid: how will the hearer/reader continue this line of followers?

⁹⁷ The anointing by the women so long after Jesus' death, has been considered implausible by Schweizer (*Mark*, 364). Lane's suggestion that it was to have been a sign

so that the narrative operates predominantly from the perspective of the women themselves. Are they to be seen as the only ones who are true disciples—who followed from Galilee? If so, and if they remained at the cross, and now respond at the tomb,⁹⁸ their arrival in the half-light of morning may be indicative of their devotion to Jesus, and their desire to anoint his body at the earliest possible time.⁹⁹ Equally, however, it flags other possibilities, including establishing the setting

of devotion rather than an anointing (*Mark*, 585) seems unlikely. Adela Yarbro Collins (*The beginning of the Gospel: probings of Mark in context*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, 134–135) suggests that Mark has introduced this motivation to explain the women's visit to the tomb. Moloney (*Mark*, 343) considers that the "history of the tradition ultimately escapes us." Gundry (*Mark*, 989) notes the unusual nature of this anointing—with aromatics rather than the usual Jewish practice of using oils—suggestive of royal imagery. The delay in their coming to anoint the body is because of the need to purchase the aromatics and the subsequent intervention of the Sabbath. Gundry does not seem explicitly to note the Markan irony that this victim of crucifixion—unlike all others that are usually not anointed at all—is to be anointed beyond the usual Jewish custom. Fowler ("Reader-response criticism," *Mark and method*, 76) helpfully notes the dramatic irony involved in the mention of the women coming to anoint Jesus (16:1): "The reader has already heard that an anonymous woman anointed Jesus for his burial (*Mark* 14:8). When the three named (prominent? important?) women come to the tomb to anoint the body, the thoughtful reader may suspect that they are doomed to failure because what they intend to do has already been done." Hooker (*Mark*, 384) also connects the women's actions: "Her [the anonymous woman's] action was a prophetic sign of his death; theirs is made impossible because of his resurrection."

⁹⁸ The same women witness death, burial and resurrection (so Lamar Williamson, *Mark: a Bible commentary for teaching and preaching*, Atlanta, Ga: John Knox Press, 1983, 284), although it can be noted that there are some differences among the names at the two sites. Gundry notes the slight variations, but considers that it is partly explained by the shorthand reference to only one son at a time (*Mark*, 989). He also considers the variations verify the authenticity of the narrative, since fabrication would have resulted in a clear harmonisation of names across the two narratives (Gundry, *Mark*, 996). Kathleen E. Corley ("Women and the crucifixion and burial of Jesus," *Forum*, new series 1, 1 Spring 1998, 205–206) separates the likelihood of women at the crucifixion and empty tomb. While she accepts the possibility that the women were at Calvary, she considers the empty tomb story to be "a modification of a strong literary and cultural connection between women, tomb cults and magic . . . [and is] sort of an anti-deification story which employs a . . . narrative device of an 'empty tomb' . . . common in deification or translation stories in antiquity . . . As it stands, *Mark* 16:1–8 is a fictional anti-translation or deification story." At the level of the narrative plane, however, the two episodes are clearly linked, and therefore the women's presence at the tomb is necessary for the narrative to achieve its ultimate purpose; but contra Corley, this purpose seems not to have related to any kind of 'deification' effect.

⁹⁹ The use of the historic present here and subsequently in the passage suggests a return to the breathless narrative that was established at the start of Mark's gospel. The resumption of such a style contributes to the overall impression of the need to return to the beginning for 'completion.'

for the element of fear or wonder that will shortly be evident.¹⁰⁰ The initial dialogue that ensues among the women concerns the removal of the stone so that they can access the tomb.¹⁰¹ What, then, can be made of their flight in terror and subsequent silence? Timothy Dwyer argues for a response of wonder rather than fear from the women; their silence is a response of ἔκστασις to the element of the numinous, but it is a temporary silence.¹⁰² This would indicate that the women do cross the dialogic threshold established by the young man, but at a point beyond the text. His analysis—although attractive—is not entirely successful, however, since the women’s silence does not appear to be temporary, and the element of the numinous appears to be played down in Mark more than in the other Synoptic gospels. By contrast, Phillips sees the fear and silence as an expression of “the shock of discovering the consequences of their marginalisation within the fellowship.”¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Moloney (*Mark*, 343) helpfully notes that “Mark 16:2 gives the readers their first hint that the darkness that enveloped the earth during the crucifixion (15:33–37) has been overcome.” Belo (*Lecture matérialiste*, 231) also notes the newness associated with the sunrise.

¹⁰¹ The question concerning who will roll away the stone “is an ironic reminder to the reader that Jesus had four brothers (Mark 6:3) who could have helped their mother with funeral observances for their dead brother. He also had twelve disciples who all said they would never forsake him (Mark 14:31). In Mark, everyone seems to abandon Jesus... especially... the men who might have accompanied the women in paying their last respects.” (Fowler, “Reader-response,” 77) The question concerning the stone has also been understood to indicate that the resurrection is an event entirely of God’s doing (so Williamson, *Mark*, 284). Moloney (*Mark*, 344) notes that the question relates to the intervention of God in the scene: “The most important character has entered the narrative. God, implied by the divine passive, has overcome the darkness and has opened the seemingly impossible (vv. 2–4).” Belo (*Lecture matérialiste*, 231) notes helpfully that the narrative was ‘closed’ by the stone when the body is buried, but with the reopening of the stone, so too the narrative is recommenced.

¹⁰² Timothy Dwyer (*The motif of wonder in the Gospel of Mark*, JSNT Supp 128, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, 185–195). Magness (*Sense and absence*, 100) suggests that the women’s silence is only until they reach the disciples; until then they say nothing to anyone else. But this goes beyond what the narrative indicates. Similarly, Dorothy Lee (*The last days of Jesus: Mark 11 to 16*, Sutherland: Albatross, 1993, 186) perceptively maintains that the women are overcome by fear because something has happened which is outside human experience or understanding. Their silence is the experience of the ineffable. Lee notes that Mark does not resolve the ambiguity of whether or not the women eventually break the silence or are finally disobedient. The reason is that the hearing-reader must complete the story: will the hearing-reader, despite being awestruck, proclaim the resurrection? Or remain silent?

¹⁰³ Victoria Phillips, “The failure of the women who followed Jesus in the Gospel of Mark,” in A.-J. Levine (ed.) *A feminist companion to Mark*, 222–236. While Phillips’ feminist approach to the women disciples is stimulating, her focus on the Twelve, as part of the inner group that effectively marginalizes the women, tends to draw too fine a distinction between the Twelve and other followers (such as at the Last Sup-

But Phillips' analysis is conjectural at many points, and is not entirely convincing in its conclusions.

The invitation to return to Galilee is part of the threshold to which the women are called.¹⁰⁴ If Galilee is the place where the disciples (male and female) are engaged in following, Jerusalem is the place of their failure. The young man's reference to Galilee is certainly a central element of the threshold encounter with the women, but it will only be possible for the women to *fully* cross that dialogical threshold in the setting of Galilee. While they are here in Jerusalem, they fail to cross; yet the threshold remains open, prompting the hope that the women *will* cross the threshold—despite their silence here—when they return to the place of their belief rather than their unbelief.

At second-level dialogue, the apparent failure of the women prompts the hearing-reader to conclude that this is the ultimate collapse of the discipleship narrative, and the ultimate failure to penetrate through to an understanding of Jesus' identity.¹⁰⁵ No-one has understood who Jesus is—not the disciples, not the crowd, certainly not those who are antagonistic (Herod, Pilate, the Jewish leaders), not even the centurion at the cross¹⁰⁶—and the only characters that have come close are the

per). It is difficult to correlate certain sections of the narrative (such as their actions and conversation on the way to the tomb in 16:1–3) with her conclusion that "the women came to the tomb...seeking Jesus—the risen Jesus, not the body of Jesus, as is usually asserted."

¹⁰⁴ Belo (*Lecture matérialiste*, 232) compares Galilee as the theatre of Jesus' power, with Judaea as the theatre of his death and of unbelief. Gundry correctly notes (*Mark*, 1004) that there is no *command* to return to Galilee, "but only a declaration that they will see Jesus in Galilee (when they do go back, it is understood)." Williamson (*Mark*, 285) notes that at the narrative level, Galilee functions literally and geographically, but at a discourse level between text and reader, it is "the locus of the mission to the nations. Galilee is also the place from which the disciples and the women came."

¹⁰⁵ Fowler ("Reader," 80) correctly notes that "[i]f we can resist Matthew's resisting reading of Mark, we can recognise that the three women in Mark 16:1–8 fail, just as so many others in the story have failed before them...Mark's Gospel may end without insight and faith among the characters, but...understanding the ending of Mark is not to understand the women or men in the story, but to understand what is happening in the women or men reading the story." Moloney notes helpfully that "[t]he women, who had overcome the scandal of the cross by looking on from afar as Jesus died (15:40–41), and had watched where he was buried (15:47), have not been able to overcome the scandal of the empty tomb and the Easter proclamation. They have joined the disciples in flight (ἐφυγον; cf. 14:50, 52) and fear (ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ; cf. 4:41; 6:50; 9:32; 10:32). Like Peter, they have degenerated from following 'from a distance' (ἀπὸ μακρόθεν, 15:40; cf. 14:54) to final failure (16:8; cf. 14:66–72)." (*Mark*, 348).

¹⁰⁶ Full discussion of the characterisation of the centurion follows in chapter 5 on the passion narrative.

women. Now they, too, have failed.¹⁰⁷ The hearing-reader is therefore presented with the ultimate word-with-a-loophole: Jesus has slipped through to Galilee and the narrative remains ultimately unfinalisable; the hearing-reader is called to return with the women (and the other disciples) to Galilee and re-establish the narrative *beyond* the level of the text.¹⁰⁸

Third-level dialogue uncovers intriguing parallels with *Callirhoe*, where Chaereas reaches Callirhoe's tomb, discovers the stones had been moved and the entrance was open. Elements of amazement and perplexity are evident, as is the presence of a messenger.¹⁰⁹ Later, when Chaereas is on the pirate ship he laments that he has found Callirhoe's grave clothes, but questions where she is—or at least where her corpse may be.¹¹⁰ Equally interesting is a reference to Callirhoe, who is in the tomb and is terrified at the prospect of the tomb-robbers entering. She (unexpectedly) throws herself at the first tomb-robber's knees as he is entering the tomb, and he is in turn terrified and warns his fellow-thieves

¹⁰⁷ Williamson (*Mark*, 285) notes that “[t]he one group of faithful followers finally fails; the resurrection predictions are fulfilled, but the second shoe [sic] (appearance to the disciples in Galilee) never drops.” Anderson (*Mark*, 358) comments that the women’s “fearful silence eloquently enough proclaims the truth that the first word and the last word of the good news is not anything men or women can think or say or do, but *God’s own witness to his Son*.”

¹⁰⁸ Camery-Hoggart (*Irony*, 177) notes perceptively that the hearing-reader is confronted by the ironies in Mark “with a deep sense that more is going on than meets the eye... The reader is forced back into the book again.”

¹⁰⁹ “μόνον δὲ τὸν θάνατον τοῦ πένθους ἰατρὸν ἐνόμιζε· παραγενόμενος δὲ εὗρε τοὺς λίθους κεκινημένους καὶ φανεράν τὴν εἴσοδον· ὁ μὲν οὖν ἰδὼν ἐξεπλάγη καὶ ὑπὸ δεινῆς ἀπορίας κατείχετο τοῦ γεγονότος χάριν· ἄγγελος δὲ Φήμη ταχεῖα Συρακοσίους ἐμήνυσε τὸ παράδοξον” (*De Chaerea et Callirhoe* 3.3.1–3.3.2).

¹¹⁰ “Καλλιρόη· ταῦτά ἐστι τὰ σά· στέφανος οὗτος, ὃν ἐγὼ σοι περιέθηκα· τοῦτο ὁ πατήρ σοι δέδωκε, τοῦτο ἡ μήτηρ· αὕτη στολὴ νυμφικὴ· τάφος σοι γέγονεν ἡ ναῦς· ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν σά· βλέπω, σὺ δὲ ποῦ; μόνη τοῖς ἐνταφίοις ἡ νεκρὰ λείπει.” (*Callirhoe*, 3.3.15–3.3.16) Daniel A Smith (“Revisiting the empty tomb: the post-mortem vindication of Jesus in Mark and Q,” *NovT*, vol. XLV, 2, 2003, 129–130, 137) claims, as supporting evidence for his thesis that there were assumption theories surrounding Jesus’ death, that there is a prototypical interpretation of assumption in Chaereas’ musings. Smith concludes that Callirhoe has experienced assumption. Corley (“Women and the crucifixion,” 205–206) similarly refers to *Callirhoe* as evidence that “Hellenistic translation tradition is certainly the best literary context in which to understand the ‘empty tomb’ tradition found in Mark... As it stands, Mark 16:1–8 is a fictional anti-translation or deification story.” Yet the text of *Callirhoe* seems to support more a thought of a kidnapping of Callirhoe—even if she were a goddess—rather than divine favour and status elevation as might be expected.

about what he believes to be a spirit guarding the tomb.¹¹¹ Two similar instances occur in *Ephesiaca*, when Perilaus learns that Anthia's tomb has been broken into and the body gone,¹¹² and also when Habrocomes hears that the body has been spirited away.¹¹³ At the very least, these parallel stories indicate the motif of an unexpectedly empty tomb is not in itself unique in first-century thought, and is capable of diverse explanations.

There are also co-textual dialogical links between the women who come to anoint Jesus' (dead) body and the woman at Mark 14:1–11 who anointed his (living) body. The silence of these women is contrasted with the proclamation of the other woman's action, and also contrasted with the silences commanded throughout the rest of the Gospel, including the command to silence at the time of Transfiguration. It is only after the resurrection that the event (and meaning) of the Transfiguration is to be proclaimed; ironically, after the resurrection, the women are silent.¹¹⁴

The comic carnivalesque is evident here: the women arrive at a tomb they cannot open themselves to pay their last respects to Jesus-as-carnival-clown, only to find that all that is left is his mask—to which the young man points (16:4–6). The secrecy which has been enjoined by Jesus on various people throughout the earlier section of Mark—and which is regularly ignored—finds its comic obverse here: the women are now told to report what they know to the disciples, yet they are struck silent. Jesus, the carnival clown whose identity was always in danger

¹¹¹ (De Chaerea et Callirhoe 1.9.3) “τὴν Καλλιρόην Κατελάμβανεν ὁμοῦ πάντα, φόβος, χαρά, λύπη, θαυμασμός, ἐλπίς, ἀπιστία... (1.9.4) καὶ κείνος φοβηθεὶς ἐξεπῆδησε. τρέμων δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἐταίρους ἐφθέγγετο ‘φεύγωμεν ἐντεῦθεν· δαίμων γάρ τις φυλάττει τὰ ἔνδον καὶ εἰσελθεῖν ἡμῖν οὐκ ἐπιτρέπει.’”

¹¹² ὁ δὲ Περίλαος μαθὼν τὴν τοῦ τάφου διορυγὴν καὶ <τὴν> τοῦ σώματος ἀπώλειαν ἐν πολλῇ καὶ ἀκατασχέτῳ λύπῃ ἦν. (*Ephesiaca*, 3.9.1).

¹¹³ ἀνορύξαντες τὸν τάφον τὸν τε κόσμον ἀνείλοντο καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀφανὲς ἐποίησαν. (*Ephesiaca*, 3.9.8).

¹¹⁴ Broadhead (*Mark*, 138) comments: “At the end of this Gospel the reader is left with an unfulfilled command and a gospel not yet proclaimed. Here the final lines of Jesus’ identity are put into place: he is the Crucified One who leads the way into God’s future. Stark demands are placed on those who would follow Jesus beyond the pages of this story. Disciples are commanded to hear, to follow, to go and tell with courage.” Yet clearly there is no evidence in the text that the women do tell. Moloney (*Mark*, 352) comments helpfully: “The event that bridged the gap between the end of the Gospel of Mark and the community which heard it and read it took place because of the initiative of God, and not the success of men or women. The Christian community that produced and received the Gospel of Mark existed because of the initiative of God.”

of being ‘unmasked’ before his passion, and who unmasks himself in the passion but is ‘re-masked’ by various characters who do not accept his identity, has promised to appear unmasked in Galilee. The silent ‘voices’ of the women effectively re-mask Jesus for the other disciples, at least until such time as a ‘chance’ meeting with the unmasked Jesus occurs when the others are back in Galilee.

Significance of the dialogical ‘voices’

The women’s ‘voices’, although they are speaking to each other, are not in effective dialogue with each other, since each is effectively part of the one ‘voice’ asking the question concerning the stone. Yet at another level, the women’s ‘voices’ invite the hearing-reader’s ‘voice’ to state further disapproval of the male disciples since only the women’s ‘voice’ speaks courage enough to take them to the tomb to serve Jesus, whereas it should have been the role of the male disciples to assist the women by moving the stone. The women’s ‘voice’ is devoid of hope, and it is only on arrival at the tomb that a threshold is established through the ‘voice’ of the young man. With the note of hope sounded by the young man’s ‘voice’, the women’s ‘voice’ is then silenced.¹¹⁵

The silenced ‘voices’ of the women, and the challenging ‘voice’ of the young man, create a threshold for the hearing-reader, who is called to return to the beginning of the narrative, to the Galilee, to the start of discipleship. For the hearing-reader also has failed in the course of the narrative: failed to respond adequately to the various ‘voices’ that have proclaimed Jesus’ identity; failed to remain with Jesus in Gethsemane and at the cross; failed to realise that the ‘voice’ of a true disciple is ultimately a suffering voice. Yet the hearing-reader hears the ‘voice’ of Jesus calling through the ‘voice’ of the young man, and is encouraged to return again to the beginning and follow Jesus.¹¹⁶ Jesus’ ‘voice’

¹¹⁵ Broadhead (*Mark*, 136) notes that the silence of the women “also silences the voice of the narrative, and Mark 16:1–8 offers no solution for this dilemma.” While Broadhead is correct that there is no solution evident in the Markan ending, the dilemma is one to be resolved *outside* the text. So Williamson (*Mark*, 285), who notes that “Mark’s ending is no end; only the reader can bring closure.”

¹¹⁶ Moloney (*Mark*, 353–354) comments: “The original readers of the Gospel of Mark, aware of their fragility, were encouraged by a story which told of the inability of the original disciples, men and women, to overcome their fear and follow Jesus through the cross to resurrection (14:50; 16:8)... The realization of Jesus’ promises is not found *in the text*. The existence of the Markan community and its story of Jesus indicate that it is taking place *among the readers of the text*, in the experience of the original

therefore has the final word—that he is going ahead of the disciples: this is entirely appropriate since it is Jesus' 'voice' that calls into being the discipleship narrative at the beginning of the Gospel, and that same 'voice' here re-calls that discipleship narrative.

readers and hearers of the Gospel of Mark. (354)...As Christian disciples continue to fail and flee in fear, they are told that God's action in and through the risen Jesus overcomes all such failure." (See also Robert Tannehill, "The Gospel of Mark as narrative Christology," *Semeia* 16, 1980, 82–84.)

CHAPTER FOUR

‘ROAD’ CHRONOTOPE AND COMIC CARNIVAL IN MARK 8–10

Bakhtin and the ‘Road’ Section of Mark

The commencement of the ‘road’ chronotope¹ can be connected with Mark 8:22 and the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida, even though Mark 8:27 is the first significant instance where ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ occurs. The earlier instance at Mark 8:3, where Jesus refuses to send the people away in case they faint ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ seems unconnected to the commencement of the ‘road’ chronotope, except perhaps to serve a preparatory function since the people must accept the offered bread in order to embark on the journey. The whole ‘road’ section of Mark is thus bracketed by two pericopae concerning blindness and sight: an *inclusio* that defines the events occurring ‘on the road.’² The references to being ‘on the way’ or ‘on the road’ connect closely with Jesus’ passion predictions: for example, Mark 8:27 commences the dialogue with the disciples ‘on the road’ concerning Jesus’ identity, which will culminate in the passion prediction at Mark 8:31; the discussion among the disciples ‘on the road’ referred to in Mark 9:33 and Mark 9:34 leads to a block of instruction concerning the first/last paradox which brings intertextual echoes of

¹ Bakhtin notes that the road chronotope is integral to what he calls “the *adventure novel of everyday life*.” (*FTC*, 111). He notes particularly two Roman novels—*Petronii Satiricon* and *Apulei metamorphoseon*—as paradigmatic examples, probably written in the first and second centuries respectively; although “the characteristic features of this type occur in other genres as well, ... [including] several works from early Christian literature” which follow a pattern of crisis and rebirth, or metamorphosis. The pace of *Petronii Satiricon* is lively, with the main characters lurching between exciting (and often scandalous) adventures that range from brothels to country inns, slum markets for stolen goods to the Chapel of Priapus, shipwreck to luxurious life as an imposter, and is a classic example of menippean satire. While it functions as a pornographic novel, it also provides insight into the language and culture of the ‘vulgar’ classes.

² Rikki E. Watts (*Isaiah’s new Exodus and Mark*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997, 269) notes that “Mark’s ‘Way’ section, carefully bracketed by his only two ‘healing of sight’ miracles, is built around the theme of the blindness of Jesus’ disciples to the means by which Yahweh has chosen to fulfil his Isaianic promises of a NE [New Exodus]: namely the suffering of his Messiah.”

the Suffering Servant; and Jesus' movement 'on the road' to Jerusalem at Mark 10:32 connects with the passion prediction at Mark 10:33.

The broader scope represented in the 'road' chronotope is evident in that it is on the

road [that] is a particularly good place for random encounters. On the road... the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people—representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages—intersect at one spatial and temporal point.³

At such an intersection of space and time, geographical features may not be exotic and are generally ordinary and everyday, yet compared with the adventure chronotope,

[s]pace becomes more concrete and saturated with a time that is more substantial: space is filled with real, living meaning, and forms a crucial relationship with the hero and his fate.⁴

In this 'road' section of Mark, therefore, temporal-spatial markers are more frequent, specific and significant than earlier in the Gospel: εἰς Βηθσαϊδάν (Mark 8:22); εἰς τὰς κόμας Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου (Mark 8:27) μετὰ ἡμέρας ἕξ (Mark 9:2); εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλόν (Mark 9:2); εἰς Καφαρναούμ (Mark 9:33); εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν (Mark 10:10); εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα (Mark 10:32); εἰς Ἱεριχώ (Mark 10:46); ἀπὸ Ἱεριχώ (Mark 10:46); εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα εἰς Βηθφαγή καὶ Βηθανίαν πρὸς τὸ Ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν (Mark 11:11); εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα εἰς τὸ ἱερόν (Mark 11:11); εἰς Βηθανίαν (Mark 11:11); as well as the frequent references to ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ (Mark 8:27, 9:33, 34; 10:32, 52.).⁵ Mark 11:14 appears to be the functional 'end' of this chronotopic section, since in the following verse they have now *come* to Jerusalem (compared with merely entering and leaving as

³ *FTC*, 243.

⁴ Contra Broadhead (*Mark*, 89), who comments on this section of Mark that it is essentially static: neither settings nor geographical locations change much or have much impact on the story, with the possible exception of the mountain setting of the Transfiguration.

⁵ The number of specific temporal-spatial markers in this section of Mark is significantly greater than the number of specific indicators in Mark 1–8:21: while in Mark 1–8:21 there are many relatively non-specific markers (e.g. Mark 1:9 is 'in the Jordan,' and several references are to regions such as διὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας), there are few specific markers: εἰς Καφαρναούμ (Mark 1:21); εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν Σίμωνος καὶ Ἀνδρέου (Mark 1:29); εἰς Καφαρναούμ (Mark 2:1); ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ (Mark 2:15); πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν (Mark 6:45); εἰς Γεννησαρέτ (Mark 6:53); ἐκ τῶν ὁρίων Τύρου ἦλθεν διὰ Σιδῶνος (Mark 7:31). This makes a total of seven from Mark 1–8:21; whereas in the 'Way' section, there are 11 (or possibly 12) such specific markers in just 2.5 chapters, together with non-specific ones such as διὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας (Mark 9:30); εἰς τὰ ὄρια τῆς Ἰουδαίας [καὶ] πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου (Mark 10:1).

at Mark 11:11). Although they subsequently may go out of the city, they are no longer on the way, and therefore Mark 11:15 commences the next section, relating to the Passion.

While the element of random encounters is an important feature of the 'road' chronotope, as it is for the adventure chronotope, the distinguishing feature of such encounters 'on the road' are that they are determined "by the hero himself and by the nature of his personality."⁶ The Markan Jesus has clearly indicated his fate; his resolute decision to face it places him 'on the road' to Jerusalem. Broadhead notes the importance of the unit for characterisation, both in terms of Jesus and the disciples:

A new understanding of Jesus is reached: he is the son of man who will suffer and serve, but also the son of man who will come in glory... [Yet] the more precisely the character of Jesus is revealed to the disciples, the greater their failure to understand and to follow him.⁷

Bakhtin also connects the road chronotope with key

themes of *metamorphosis* (*transformation*)—particularly human transformation—and *identity* (particularly human identity) [which] are drawn from the treasury of pre-class world folklore.⁸

It is entirely appropriate at a narrative level, therefore, for the Transfiguration to be considered an integral part of the 'road' section of Mark, even though it necessitates a withdrawal from the road into a setting that appears inimical to it.⁹ The themes of metamorphosis and identity are closely connected with a final constitutive feature of the 'road' chronotope: that the effect of chance "is here utterly subordinated to the other sequence that encompasses and interprets it: guilt—punishment—redemption—blessedness."¹⁰

⁶ *FTC*, 117.

⁷ Broadhead (*Mark*, 89–90).

⁸ *FTC*, 112.

⁹ This is contrary to the view that it is a displaced resurrection-narrative (e.g. Weeden, *Mark*, 118–126; C.E. Carlston, "Transfiguration and Resurrection," *JBL* 80, 1961, 233–240; F.R. McCurley, "'And after six days' (Mark 9:2): a Semitic literary device," *JBL* 93, 1974, 67–81; F. Watson, "The social function of Mark's secrecy theme," *JNT* 24, 1985, 49–69); or even that it is primarily a prolepsis of the resurrection, (e.g. Cranfield, *Mark*, 288); or Schweizer's view (*Mark*, 180–181), that it was an experience by the three disciples which was interpreted apocalyptically in the early church.

¹⁰ *FTC*, 118–119. Bakhtin illustrates this process by referring to *Apulei metamorphoseon* in which "a frivolous and fecklessly curious Lucius becomes [transformed into] Lucius the Ass, and after his suffering he becomes Lucius purified and enlightened."

In Mark, however, while this sequence is less exact, it is still evident in this section in the passion-predictions. The element of guilt is associated with those who will hand Jesus over, yet it is also clearly Jesus who is ‘guilty’ of initiating the sequence by going to Jerusalem—and this provokes Peter’s rebuke (Mark 8:31–32). He will undergo the ‘punishment’ that is explained in increasing detail in the three predictions (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33–34), and will experience redemption/blessedness by rising after three days. The hearing-reader may also see this sequence build for the disciples, as they become increasingly guilty of misunderstanding and deserting Jesus. Ultimately they are ‘punished’ by being expunged from the narrative—and invited back, proleptically, at the end.

It may be thought that this section of the Markan narrative also differs from the usual form of the ‘road’ chronotope where the

guilt, retribution, purification and blessedness are private and individual... The individual changes and undergoes metamorphosis completely independent of the world; the world itself remains unchanged. Therefore, metamorphosis has a merely personal and unproductive character.¹¹

The nature of Mark’s ‘hidden’ revelation does fit the chronotope very well, however. While the transfiguration in Mark 9 appears to be public, the *κατ’ ἰδίαν* (Mark 9:2) motif suggests a private (esoteric) revelation. The metamorphosis clearly has no impact on the world *at that point*, and the overall motif of the metamorphosis in Mark is to indicate the true (although hidden) *identity* of Jesus. The implications of the glory/blessedness that will come after the suffering/redemption are potentially world-changing, but not yet fully manifest within the narrative world.

The ‘road’ chronotope, with its elements of the fantastic (such as metamorphosis), is closely linked with carnivalesque elements. The influence of the carnivalesque is considerable, such as the element of

experimental fantasticality... [including] observation from some unusual point of view, from on high, for example, which results in a radical change in the scale of the observed phenomena of life...¹²

In *Apulei metamorphoseon*, Lucius the Ass is thus constantly found in situations that are fantastic or extraordinary. The language used to describe the metamorphosis of the Markan Jesus is also transcendent

¹¹ *FTC*, 119.

¹² *PDP*, 116.

and hyperbolic rather than strictly literal: for example, εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλόν (Mark 9:2) has prompted conjecture concerning an exact location for such a mountain. Such hyperbolic language is also used to describe Jesus' clothing: καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο στίλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν οἷα γναφεὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐ δύναται οὕτως λευκᾶναι (Mark 9:3). This choice of language provides a strong hint of possible carnivalesque elements in the passage. For this reason, therefore, this section (Mark 8:22–52) will be considered under the rubric of the road chronotope and comic carnival.

Bakhtin and the Transfigured Jesus (Mark 9:2–8)

Debate concerning the nature of this episode continues to raise an extraordinary range of possibilities. As well as the theories that consider it a misplaced or retrojected resurrection narrative,¹³ this narrative has also been deemed a "Sinai-like architectonic center,"¹⁴ and a site for still further temptation of Jesus.¹⁵ The indication of a specific temporal interval—unusual for Mark—has proven suggestive for many

¹³ Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 386–388) provides a helpful survey of the different views concerning the Transfiguration (e.g. Wellhausen, Bultmann) but notes the problem facing proponents of the retrojected resurrection appearance theory, namely: the inability "to account for the presence of Moses and Elijah in the story, the cloud, the voice, and Peter's words in ix.5" (Taylor, *Mark*, 387).

¹⁴ See Waetjen (*Reordering*, 148), who maintains it "serves as the site of the revelation of the deity of the New Human Being that has been concealed in the 'clay pot' of Jesus' flesh-and-blood body." Van Iersel (*Mark*, 294) similarly maintains that the origin of the high mountain is to be found in Exodus 24.

¹⁵ Miller and Miller (*Mark as Midrash*, 230) see that "Jesus' charge to 'tell no one,' as always in Mark, indicates that the transfiguration has been a temptation for Jesus. God had to remind Jesus, as well as the three, that Jesus is God's beloved son, not the miraculous Elijah-Moses type of figure who escapes death by a guaranteed reward of resurrection." Regrettably, their whole thesis is difficult to sustain in light of the 'strong-man' saying (Mark 3:26–27); John Riches ("Conflicting mythologies: mythical narrative in the Gospel of Mark" *JNT* 84, 2001, 43) notes that after Jesus has first bound Satan "the notion of the struggle between Jesus and the cosmic powers recedes as the narrative advances... [and] the notions of satanic temptation and corruption remain in the background." The implication of failure by the Markan Jesus to resist temptation would therefore appear to be at odds with the tenor of the strong-man saying and of the continuing dialogue with the identity of Jesus. It is difficult to imagine who Miller and Miller imagine Jesus to be, given that they suggest that the text implies a divine 'correction' of Jesus.

commentators,¹⁶ although Bakhtin's concept of chronotopicity proposes an alternative understanding of such temporo-spatial indicators.¹⁷ Certainly most would consider it an occasion where the Markan Jesus reveals his identity to the 'inner core' of the disciple band. Yet the narrative is intriguing, as it appears to obscure Jesus' identity as much as it reveals.

Bakhtin's ambiguous concept of "[i]rony as a form of silence"¹⁸ may be evident here: a silence can prompt the hearing-reader to seek to 'finalize' the meaning of the narrative (not to mention the characters at the level of the text, as for example with Peter's outburst (Mark 9:5–6!); yet to do so is to risk prematurely terminating the dialogue with the text. Jesus removes his 'carnival mask' to reveal his identity, yet maintains an ironic silence about what that identity could mean, except that it somehow relates to the (equally silent) characters of Elijah and Moses. The divine 'voice' thunders against Peter's response, commanding the characters (and the hearing-reader) to listen to Jesus. Yet Jesus maintains silence (Mark 9:8), returns the 'carnival mask' to its position, and eventually commands the three disciples to silence (Mark 9:9).

Dialogue with the Text

Variants within the passage are very minor, relating mainly to readings undoubtedly inspired by parallel passages in Matthew 17 and Luke 9. The text as it stands is preferred to any recension that includes such accommodations.

¹⁶ Hurtado draws the comparison with Moses (Exodus 24:15–18) "where after six days Moses is summoned to a mountaintop and is given a revelation of God." (Hurtado, 144). He also notes the link with the promise by Moses in Deut 18:15, which is here shown as being fulfilled in the presence of Jesus; and further underlined by the allusion to Deut 18:15 in Mark 9:7 ('listen to him') which is a quotation from Moses' statement. Cranfield (*Mark*, 289) connects it with the saying in 9.1—this is fulfilment of that promise. Waetjen (Reordering, 148) considers the transfiguration an "unveiling of the apotheosis of the New Human Being through a metamorphosis [which] is an anticipation of Easter and its consolidation of the new creation.... [This occurs] in other words, on the seventh day, a time reference that intimates completion or fulfilment."

¹⁷ As previously discussed.

¹⁸ *N70*, 134.

Character-zones

Three sets of speech-utterances occur in the passage, establishing the dialogue among the character-zones. The first 'unspoken' dialogue involves Elijah, Moses and Jesus (συλλαλοῦντες (Mark 9:4)), then Peter's inappropriate word (ἀποκριθεὶς...λέγει (Mark 9:5)) which prompts the answering word from the divine 'voice' (ἐγένετο φωνή (Mark 9:7)). Although Jesus does not speak, the centrality of his identity requires that he be considered first, and then the other character-zones.

Jesus

First-level dialogue yields no direct speech on Jesus' part, but rather a revelatory moment in which God reveals the glory that awaits after the Cross and the suffering that Jesus has predicted shortly before. The Markan Jesus has responded to Peter's confession (Mark 8:29) by confirming his identity¹⁹—despite the rejection (Mark 8:33) of Peter's re-interpretation of what that identity means. The way of suffering leads to glory, but the true and glorious identity of Jesus is realized only by way of the suffering he has predicted. The threshold created by Jesus' silence is a word-with-a-loop-hole for both the three disciples and the hearing-reader. Even at the point of revelation of great glory, the identity of the Markan Jesus is not fully disclosed: clearly greater than either Elijah or Moses, he does not 'define' himself, and the divinely initiated transformation merely provides hints of the glory surrounding his identity. This silence will cause Peter to try to fill the void, making a suggestion that would tend to 'finalise' who Jesus is (and that clearly in relation to Elijah and Moses) by building enclosures for each of the three. The threshold does not collapse, however, because of Jesus' silence or Peter's response: the rebuke by the divine 'voice' re-establishes Jesus' 'voice' as being supremely authoritative. Yet although the disciples are commanded to listen, Jesus continues to remain silent about his identity—and commands silence about the revelatory experience (Mark 9:9).²⁰

¹⁹ "...the essence of Jesus' identity is unveiled" (Waeijen, *Reordering*, 148).

²⁰ Several scholars have commented concerning the command to silence: "The lesson for the reader is that any intelligent talk of the glory of Jesus cannot be done apart from emphasis upon his death and resurrection, and that any Christian preaching and devotion that is not centered on the meaning of these events is shallow and confused." (Hurtado, *Mark*, 147; see also Broadhead, *Mark*, 137). Williamson (*Mark*, 161) notes perceptively that this "is the last and climactic case in which a christological

Second-level dialogue with the hearing-reader does not disclose the full nature of Jesus' identity: the hearing-reader recognises the 'word-with-a-loop-hole,' and realizes that the Markan Jesus is clearly greater than either Elijah or Moses, being linked with them in a double sense. Elijah and Moses represent Prophets and Law, and Jesus is shown to be greater than both. Yet the placement of Elijah's name before that of Moses indicates to the hearing-reader an association with the faithful suffering of both.²¹

Third-level dialogue connects the event with several generic contacts, including the epiphany genre,²² but from a Bakhtinian perspective could be considered to relate most closely to carnivalesque elements. As well as the hyperbolic reference to the size of the mountain, several other elements of the fantastic are evident. The brightness of Jesus' garments connects intertextually to Exodus 34:29–30, 35; and Daniel 7:9;²³ and co-textually with the young man at the tomb (Mark 16:5). Yet the image also has Graeco-Roman comparisons with Philostratus' aretalogical work *Vita Apollonii*,²⁴ where *στίλβω* is used in reference to dragon's scales glittering like silver. In *Callirhoe*,²⁵ Chaereas is described as being *στίλβω*. The comparative relates not to his garments, however, but to his face, which is described as being bright—like gold on silver. It is this that makes him attractive to everyone. Interestingly, there are no other usages of *στίλβω* in other Greek novels. The reference to *λευκός* and *λευκαίνω*, however, find several points of similarity in ancient Greek

confession... is to be kept secret. Only here is a time limit set: 'until the Son of Man (shall) have risen from the dead.'... There is no way rightly to understand who Jesus is until one has seen him suffer, die, and rise again." But if this is part of a carnival 'masking,' the command to silence may simply be a matter of readjusting the carnival mask after a brief unmasking for the three disciples.

²¹ See further discussion under Elijah and Moses.

²² See Heil (*Mark*, 186), who maintains that this sudden 'transfiguration' or 'transformation' of Jesus into a heavenly figure before three of his disciples signals the beginning of an 'epiphany' genre. As a literary genre an epiphany portrays a sudden and unexpected manifestation of a divine or heavenly being before selected witnesses, which offers for their response a special insight or revelation into God's salvific ways.

²³ Williamson (*Mark*, 158) helpfully sees the brightness of Jesus' garments as having associations with "the light of the *Shekinah*, the divine presence as perceived as radiance in the pillar of fire, on the mountain, in the sanctuary, and in apocalyptic visions."

²⁴ *Vita Apollonii* 3.7.9–3.7.11 "οὗτοι καὶ γενειάσκουσι καὶ τὸν αὐχένα ὑποῦ αἶρουσι καὶ τὴν φολίδα στίλβουσι δίκην ἀργύρου..."

²⁵ *Callirhoe* 1.1.5–1.1.6 "τότε δὲ Χαίρεας ἀπὸ τῶν γυμνασίων ἐβάδιζεν οἴκαδε στίλβων ὥσπερ ἀστήρ· ἐπὶ νῦν γὰρ αὐτοῦ τῷ λαμπρῷ τοῦ προσώπου τὸ ἐρύθημα τῆς παλαιστράς ὥσπερ ἀργύρῳ χρυσός."

novels.²⁶ In turn, Callirhoe's skin is said to gleam white, sparkling like a shining substance.²⁷ Similarly, at a later point, Callirhoe is described as having a shining face and bared arms (or possibly shoulders) and is favourably compared with the goddesses in Homer with their white arms or fair ankles.²⁸ In *Leucippe et Clitophon* there is a passing reference to white garments with a mantle that may be purple or shining;²⁹ another full-length garment is described in fantastic terms: not only was it white fabric of a delicate texture, the nature of it is likened to a braided spider's-web!³⁰ Clearly there is a tendency in the novels to describe changes to clothing in terms that could be considered fantastic. It is therefore hardly surprising that Mark should have a similar description of Jesus' garments in a context where transcendence is overwhelming. It is intriguing to note, however, that Jesus' face is not referred to as shining—something that could perhaps be expected especially from the Exodus references,³¹ and the similar references especially in *Callirhoe*. Belo notes that Jesus' clothes metonymically represent his body, which is the object of the heavenly vision.³² This may be so, but it is equally possible that Mark is deliberately avoiding overplaying the hyperbole because, while the appearance of the garments may be transformed to reveal Jesus' glory, the identity of Jesus needs to remain both revealed and hidden. The 'mask' remains in place! It will only be with the young man in the white robe at the tomb that Jesus' identity is finally revealed (even though he is absent from the scene).

²⁶ There are many instances of λευκός and λευκαίνω (and their cognates) in the Greek novels, and also in Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii*. Few would have any point of comparison, except where they refer to white garments and the element of the fantastical is evident. At such points, their connection with the Markan passage is worth considering. (Source: CD-ROM *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* search).

²⁷ *Callirhoe* 2.2.3 “ὁ χρῶς γὰρ λευκὸς ἐστὶλψεν εὐθὺς μαρμαρυγῇ τινι ὅμοιον ἀπολάμπων.”

²⁸ *Callirhoe* 4.1.9 “ἀστράπτουσα δὲ τῷ προσώπῳ καὶ παραγυμνοῦσα τοὺς βραχίονας ὑπὲρ τὴν Λευκώλεον καὶ Καλλίσφυρον ἐφαίνετο τὰς Ὀμήρου.”

²⁹ *Leucippe et Clitophon* 1.1.10–1.1.11 “λευκὸς ὁ χιτῶν· ἡ χλαῖνα πορφυρᾷ· τὸ δὲ σῶμα διὰ τῆς ἐσθῆτος ὑπεφαίνετο.”

³⁰ *Leucippe et Clitophon* 3.7.5 “ποδῆρης χιτῶν, λευκὸς ὁ χιτῶν· τὸ ὕφασμα λεπτόν, ἀραχνίων εὐκὸς πλοκή.”

³¹ By contrast, compare Matthew 17:2 and Luke 9:29, and the minor textual variants that harmonize Mark with Matthew and Luke.

³² Belo, *Lecture matérialiste*, 162.

Elijah and Moses

The characters of Elijah and Moses help to create the dialogic threshold in their interaction with Jesus. Neither character speaks, but both represent several issues by comparison with Jesus:³³ especially, Prophets and Law; Jesus will join Elijah and Moses in the glory of heaven; however, unlike the other two, Jesus' heavenly glory occurs through suffering, rejection and death (Mark 8:31, 38).³⁴ Moses might be expected to be mentioned first of the two (cf. Matt 17:3 & Luke 9:30)—the possible Markan emphasis on the connection with Elijah as forerunner may be an intertextual reference to be considered, since it is Elijah who prepares the way for Jesus (as the conversation coming down the mountain reveals).³⁵

Third-level dialogue gives associations with other characters who, although not appearing, could be considered as 'antitypes' to Elijah

³³ Several allusions strengthen the comparison between Jesus and Moses, including the reference to the six-day interval (cf. Exodus 24:15–16), identical to the period "Moses tarried on the 'mount of God' before the divine voice called to him from the cloud." (Vincent Taylor, *Mark*, 388) Taylor does note, however, that the statement concerning the time interval is used differently from the Exodus passage. Miller and Miller (*Mark as Midrash*, 226) suggest that "the appearance of Elijah and Moses with the transformed Jesus may have been intended by Mark as a distortion in the 'sight' of the disciples, a theme which is continued in the exorcism story which follows." Not only is this unduly speculative, however, it also tends to reduce the whole narrative to the level of the purely symbolic.

³⁴ See Heil, *Mark*, 187. Waetjen (*Reordering*, 149) notes that both Elijah and Moses "had ascended the original architectonic center of Israel in order to be in the presence of God. Since they had not died but, according to tradition, had been assumed into heaven, they are able to return and by their presence testify to the authenticity of the one whom the Law and the Prophets anticipated." Assumption, as Smith ("Revisiting," 133) notes, "is typically connected with divine favour and status elevation, and consistently connected, in Jewish thought at least, with special eschatological function."

³⁵ See also Vincent Taylor, *Mark*, 390. Williamson (*Mark*, 159) notes helpfully the prominence given to Elijah who was "anticipated as the herald of the 'great and terrible day of the Lord' to fulfil Mal 4:1–5, a passage in which Moses is mentioned in his role of law-giver." John Paul Heil ("A Note on 'Elijah with Moses' in Mark 9,4," *Biblica* 80, 1999, 115) considers the use of σύν rather than καί to link Elijah and Moses suggests the subordination of Elijah to Moses; a more likely subordination, however, is that of the traditional roles of both to an apocalyptic interpretation. Schweizer, (*Mark*, 183) comments helpfully that the passage has "united two expectations which were alive in Judaism: the coming of the prophet of the end-time who is like Moses and the appearing of Elijah at the dawning of the end-time." Joel Marcus (*The way of the Lord: Christological exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993, 80–93) argues convincingly for Moses (in the context of Elijah) as an eschatological figure, providing a counter to the dominant legal tradition that Moses normally symbolizes.

and Moses. In Elijah's case, the 'antitype' is Jezebel³⁶—and the clear alternative for Jesus would be to choose between the way of Elijah and that of Jezebel.³⁷ Yet the fact that she remains unmentioned is indicative of the fact that the Markan Jesus has already determined the way of glory to be via the road of suffering. Jezebel-as-Herodias did her best to silence Elijah-as-the-Baptizer in Mark 6:14–29. Elijah's appearance here reinforces that the way to glory is by way of suffering, yet in this prolepsis of glory, Elijah can no longer be troubled by Jezebel.³⁸ In a similar manner, Moses' 'antitype' could be considered to be Aaron: while the former was on the mountain receiving God's will for the people, the latter was encountering the demonic element in the people of Israel who demanded the golden calf (Exodus 32). Thus, as Jesus-who-is-greater-than-Moses descends the mountain, he will discover that the disciples are failing in their encounter with the demonic (Mark 11:17–19). Yet Aaron is also unmentioned, as he has no place on the mountain.

Peter, James and John

The 'inner circle' of disciples are taken aside and brought to the dialogic threshold on the mountain of God. The exclusive nature of this private revelatory moment is stressed by the redundant κατ' ιδίον μόνους. Yet the failure of the three to understand Jesus' identity despite the glory of the moment prefigures again the failure of all the disciples at Gethsemane in the 'first-time narrative'.³⁹ The failure of James and

³⁶ Phyllis Trible ("Exegesis for storytellers and other strangers," *JBL* 114/1, 1995, 18) makes valuable comment on the duality/polarity of characters: "In Elijah, Jezebel dwells; in Jezebel, Elijah dwells... Elijah and Jezebel become mirror images that haunt the ages. To have one is to have the other. Whenever he appears, she is there. She haunts not only him but all that he represents in the saga of faith. To understand their inseparability is to find her on the Mount of Transfiguration..."

³⁷ Her appearance (1 Kings 16; 18; 19; 21; 2 Kings 9) marks her as the archetypal villain, in contrast with Elijah's faithfulness to God.

³⁸ Williamson (*Mark*, 161) rightly notes the parallel between John's death and Elijah's persecution at the hands of Jezebel, and concludes that this should "help [the] disciples to understand that the suffering and death of Jesus... is in accord with the will of God. Reflection on the transfiguration of Jesus in light of his death and resurrection should enable disciples to accept the path of suffering as the way of true glory for Jesus, and for themselves as well."

³⁹ The 'first-time narrative' refers to the first time that the hearing-reader encounters the text. Subsequent encounters by the hearing-reader qualify the understanding of the disciples' failure. Their failure in Gethsemane is also a partial, rather than ultimate, failure; it occurs in the 'first-time narrative' in the sense that the disciples—and the hearing-reader—are unable to 'see' or 'hear' Jesus in a resurrection-like experience

John is not immediately apparent, since both remain silent; it will not be until Mark 10:35–37 that this will be clearly evident. Peter’s failure through his inappropriate comment (Mark 9:5) serves to reinforce his misunderstanding at Mark 8:32–33, and to anticipate the disaster of Peter’s denial at Mark 14:66–72.⁴⁰

James and John also function as foils to Elijah and Moses (especially since neither Jezebel nor Aaron are mentioned): Jesus has been revealed in glory with Elijah and Moses, but shortly (Mark 10:37) James and John will seek to displace them at Jesus’ right and left hand. Their failure to understand that Jesus is the effective fulfilment of what Elijah and Moses embody, becomes complete in their desire for pre-eminence. Peter-as-Satan has already been introduced as such in Mark 8:33. Now Peter-as-Satan (again unwittingly) presents the alternative for Jesus: to remain with the path of glory by erecting *τρεῖς σκηνάς* to capture the moment (Mark 9:5). Peter remains effectively a foil to Jesus, who continues to choose the road of suffering instead of the alternative Peter suggests. Peter’s addressing Jesus as ‘Rabbi’ is incongruous and inappropriate—especially in light of his earlier confession on the way to Caesarea Philippi.⁴¹ Mark seems to stress Peter’s mistake, and this could be another indication of carnival influence at this point. One of the characteristics of the *menippea* is the occurrence of scandal scenes and the ‘inappropriate word.’⁴² Peter’s inappropriate word shatters the

such as this; nor will they be able to do so at the threshold of the cross. For Mark, it is the meeting in mission in Galilee—that lies outside the ‘first-time narrative’—which is the true threshold at which the disciples will be tested.

⁴⁰ John Paul Heil (*The transfiguration of Jesus: narrative meaning and function of Mark 9:2–8, Mat 17:1–8, and Luke 9:28–36*, *Analecta Biblica* 144, Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 2000) considers Peter’s mistake to be a deliberate theological equating of Jesus with Elijah and Moses, but it is more likely that Peter has not thought at all and his comment is merely impulsive.

⁴¹ Heil (*Mark*, 187) rightly notes this about Peter’s response. Similarly, Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 391) considers these words are consistent with Peter’s impulsive character elsewhere in the Gospel, and therefore they counter theories that view this passage as mythic or purely symbolic: “Peter’s words will always stand in the way of hypotheses which explain the story as a myth or a purely symbolic narrative; their impulsive character is in keeping with his character and with the occasion.” Williamson (*Mark*, 159) suggests here “an association of the feast of Booths with the promised Sabbath rest of the end-time.”

⁴² It is “inappropriate because of its cynical frankness, or because it profanely unmasks a holy thing, or because it crudely violates etiquette.” *PDP*, 118. An example of the inappropriate word is evident in Petronius’ *Petronii Satiricon*, where Eumolpius waxes lyrical at inappropriate moments and suffers the consequent abuse of other characters. For example, after a lengthy epic verse (*Petronii Satiricon*, I.LXXXIX) Eumolpius is pelted with stones by those strolling among the colonnades; but since he is accustomed to

moment, unmasking the holy thing—the vision of the two characters who epitomise the Law and the Prophets⁴³—and breaking the listening silence enjoined by the divine ‘voice’. Both by wanting the moment to endure (building three dwellings) and by speaking, Peter displays a comprehensive (but very human) inability to leave a holy moment alone.

Intriguingly, the authorial intrusion at Mark 9:6—οὐ γὰρ ᾔδει τί ἀποκριθῇ, ἔκφοβοι γὰρ ἐγένοντο appears to function—as a second-level dialogue—to ameliorate the effect of the disciples’ failure. A response of awe and wonder could be considered understandable,⁴⁴ and therefore, although the disciples have failed (again) such failure should not be considered monolithic in its seriousness. The disciples—despite their apparent failure—will continue to follow Jesus to Jerusalem. A comparison can be made here with the similar response of the women at the empty tomb in Mark 16:8—καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ. Perhaps the hearing-reader, having noted here the reaction of awe and wonder on the part of the disciples with their subsequent following of Jesus, will be more readily prepared for the apparent failure of the women fleeing the tomb. The hearing-reader might therefore suspect that the women’s response is also not final—like the male disciples here, they will still follow Jesus after the event that provoked the awe

such response to his ‘talents’ he merely covers his head and rushes from the Temple: “Ex is, qui in porticibus spatiabantur, lapides in Eumolpum recitantem miserunt. At ille, qui plausum ingenii sui noverat, operuit caput extraque templum profugit.” (*Petronii Satiricon*, XC). He subsequently recounts to his young friend the fact that his recitations invariably attract such response, but promises to abstain from poetry for the day to avoid quarrelling with him: “O mi, inquit, adulescens, non hodie primum auspicatus sum. Immo (sic) quoties theatrum, ut recitarem aliquid, intravi, hac me adventicia excipere frequentia solet. Ceterum ne et tecum quoque habeam rixandum, toto die me ab hoc cibo abstinebo.” (*Petronii Satiricon*, XC)

⁴³ By contrast, Waetjen (*Reordering*, 149) suggests that “[b]y placing Jesus alongside these giants of old Israel, Peter, whose earlier confession of Jesus as the Messiah had been repudiated, is insinuating a new christological identification. If Jesus is not the Christ he and his fellow disciples had envisioned, the validation of Moses and Elijah must indicate that he is in their company... Indeed, perhaps he is the one anticipated as the last prophet of history, God’s immediate forerunner who fulfils the predictions of Deut 18:15 and Mal 3:1 and 4:5–6.”

⁴⁴ Heil, (*Mark*, 186) reminds us that their reaction of fear and awe is common to the epiphany genre. Vincent Taylor (*Mark* 391) considers the fear of the three disciples to be associated with “supernatural awe rather than fright.” Waetjen (*Reordering*, 149) considers this fear to be the basis of Peter’s incompetence. Broadhead, *Mark*, 81 notes that the fear the disciples display “is normal in the face of epiphany, but the reader has learned to associate the fear of the disciples with misunderstanding and cowardice (Mark 4:40–41).” Broadhead’s assessment, however, is unduly harsh, as third-level dialogue will make clear.

and wonder. Fear, trembling and ecstasy are not foreign to the path of true discipleship.

Third-level dialogue provides intertextual hints of wonder that inform the reading of the disciples' wonder here, especially from the two works referred to by Bakhtin as representative of the road chronotope.⁴⁵ For example, in *Petronii Satiricon* the characters emerging from the cool chamber after the bath are filled with wonder at finding Trimalchio borne upon a chair with a musician accompanying, as they arrive at the same time as Agamemnon.⁴⁶ Similarly, Eumolpius and his companions listen with wonder and credulity at the tale of the Night-hags transforming a lad into a changeling of straw.⁴⁷ An important example of wonder occurs in *Apulei metamorphoseon* when Lucius is transformed back from his physical appearance as an ass, and the people marvel and wonder at the vision before them, testifying to the benefit he had received from the goddess.⁴⁸ The element of fear is very common in the ancient Graeco-Roman romances, with the most extreme occurrences at critical

⁴⁵ MacDonald (*Homeric epics*, 91–96) draws a comparison with Odysseus' 'transfiguration' before his son Telemachus. Certainly his argument is fairly persuasive at this point, and it is possible that Homer may have been a generic influence within the Markan genre-memory. MacDonald, waxing lyrical, comes unknowingly close to this concept of genre-memory when he suggests that "[l]ike the proverbial bee of ancient rhetoric, Mark harvested nectar from several blossoms—some Jewish and some Greek—and transformed them into gospel honey." (*Homeric epics*, 96.)

⁴⁶ *Petronii Satiricon*, book 5 "Hinc involutus coccina gausapa lecticae impositus est praecedentibus phaleratis cursoribus quattuor et chiramaxio, in quo deliciae eius vehebantur, puer vetulus, lippus, domino Trimalchione deformior. Cum ergo auferretur, ad caput eius symphoniacus cum minimis tibiis accessit et tanquam in aurem aliquid secreto diceret, toto itinere cantavit. Sequimur nos admiratione iam saturi et cum Agamemnone ad ianua pervenimus..."

⁴⁷ *Petronii Satiricon*, book 9. "Non cor habebat, non intestina, non quicquam: scilicet iam puerum strigae involaverant et supposuerant stramenticiu vavatonem. Rogo vos, oportet credatis, sunt mulieres plussciae, sunt Nocturnae, et quod sursum est, deorsum faciunt. Ceterum baro ille longus post hoc factum nunquam coloris sui fuit, immo post paucos dies freneticus periit." Miramur nos et pariter credimus, osculatque mensam rogamus Nocturnas, ut suis se teneant, dum redimus a cena."

⁴⁸ *Apulei metamorphoseon*, Book 11.13 "Nec me fefellit caeleste promissum: protinus mihi delabitur deformis et ferina facies. Ac primo quidem squeals pilus defluit, ac dehinc cutis crassa tenuatur, venter obesus residet, pedum plantae per ungulas in digitos exeunt, manus non iam pedes sunt, sed in erecta porriguntur officia, cervix procera cohibetur, os et caput rutundatur, aures enormes repetunt pristinam parvitatem, dentes saxei redeunt ad humanam minutiem, et, quae me potissimum cruciabat ante, cauda nusquam! Populi mirantur, religiosi venerantur tam evidentem maximi numinis potentiam et consimilem nocturnis imaginibus magnificentiam et facilitatem reformationis claraque et consona voce, caelo manus adtendentes, testantur tam inlustre deae beneficium."

moments.⁴⁹ In *Callirhoe*, at just such a critical moment when Dionysius reads certain letters and discovers that Chaereas is still alive, the mixture of emotions causes him to faint; but he is also afraid to let the letters go in case someone else reads them.⁵⁰ At another key point, the element of fear/wonder/trembling in both Chaereas' mind and that of the maid results in the (apparent) death of Callirhoe and the subsequent adventures that befall both the main characters.⁵¹

Similarly, in *Ephesiaca*, the two main characters experience a combination of ecstasy/fear/delight on their wedding night—an occasion which is the trigger for the oracle's prophecy to come true in the subsequent 'adventures' befalling them.⁵² Third-level dialogue with such texts suggests that fear and wonder (and related emotions) occur at liminal moments in 'vulgar' narratives—including, but not restricted to, narratives of the road. Such moments provide opportunities for characters to respond to new situations; in some cases, this may involve the possibility of a new level of understanding either by the characters themselves or on the part of the hearing-reader.

The divine 'voice'

The divine 'voice' echoes previous words spoken at the baptism.⁵³ It re-accentuates Peter's confession (Mark 8:29), providing a corrective to Peter's misunderstanding of Jesus' identity (Mark 8:32; 9:5). The divine

⁴⁹ Over 170 instances occur in the romances, but most are not sufficiently 'extreme' to warrant interest. (Source: CD-ROM *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* search).

⁵⁰ (*Callirhoe* 4.5.9) "Τοῦ δ' αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ, εἶτα σκότος τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτοῦ κατεχύθη. καὶ μέντοι λιποθυμήσας ὁμως ἐκράτησε τὰ γράμματα, φοβούμενος ἄλλον αὐτοῖς ἐντυχεῖν....(4.5.10) 'Διούσιος δὲ καθ' ἐαυτὸν γεγόμενος πολλάκις ἀνεγίνωσκε τὰς ἐπιστολάς. κατελάμβανε δὲ αὐτὸν πάθη ποικίλα, θυμός, ἀθυμία, φόβος, ἀπιστία."

⁵¹ (*Callirhoe* 1.4.4) "Τοιοῦτοις ῥήμασιν ὁ μιὰρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἄνθρωπος τοῦ μεираκίου τὴν ψυχὴν ἀνακουφίσας καὶ μεστὸν ποιήσας ἐλπίδος καὶ φόβου καὶ πολυπραγμοσύνης ... (1.4.10) ἡ δὲ θεράπεινα καὶ αὐτὴ περίφοβος ἡρέμα παρανοίξασα καὶ λαβομένη τῆς χειρὸς εἰσήγαγε."

⁵² *Ephesiaca* 1.9.1 "Προσειπεῖν ἔτι ἀλλήλους ἡδύναντο οὔτε ἀντιβλέψαι τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, ἐκείντο δὲ ὅφ' ἡδονῆς παρειμένοι, αἰδοῦμενοι, φοβούμενοι, πνευστιῶντες [ἡδόμενοι]· ἐπάλλετο δὲ αὐτοῖς τὰ σώματα καὶ ἐκραδαίνοντο αὐτοῖς αἱ ψυχαί."

⁵³ Vincent Taylor (*Mark* 391) rightly notes that, despite the cloud and divine voice "in eschatological contexts (cf Mark. xiii.26, xiv.62) and in apocalyptic writings (cf. Dan vii.13, 4 Ezra xiii.3, Apoc. X.1, etc.), there is no compelling reason to interpret these symbols [purely in terms of Jesus' second advent] in the present narrative." Indeed, one may argue for transcendence in general, rather than eschatology in particular, in each of these contexts. See also R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: a commentary on the Greek text*, Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2002, 254–255.

‘voice’ has—at some point outside of the Markan narrative—decreed that Jesus would suffer, die and be resurrected. The other disciples—especially Peter—have previously refused to accept the content of Jesus’ teaching on the matter (Mark 8:32). The divine ‘voice’ fully approves and reinforces Jesus’ ‘voice’—including the passion-predictions.⁵⁴ The ‘tone’ of the divine ‘voice’ can only be conjectured at, but could appear at the narrative level to be reflecting a strong rebuke of Peter. Otherwise, the ‘content’ of the divine ‘voice’ could be considered to be sufficiently ambiguous for Peter to want to proceed with his *τρεῖς σκηνάζ*. Once again the disciples are drawn to the threshold concerning the implications of Jesus’ identity, and in this instance the dialogue is with the divine ‘voice’. Their only appropriate response is silence and obedience.⁵⁵

Second-level dialogue provides the hearing-reader with the reassurance from the divine ‘voice’ that Jesus’ self-identification can be trusted. The ‘tone’ of the divine ‘voice’ as it speaks to the hearing-reader is not rebuking but recapitulatory—the hearing-reader is invited to return to the parallel words at the baptism, and retrace other self-identification by the Markan Jesus to this point in the narrative.

Third-level dialogue connects the divine ‘voice’ here with the divine ‘voice’ in Exodus 24:15–25:9. Yet unlike Moses, who is called by the divine ‘voice’ to make a tabernacle, the disciples are tacitly forbidden to do so. Such intertextual connection raises the issue of the ‘ultimate’ dialogue, in which the divine ‘voice’ is the superaddressee for biblical texts. Bakhtin considers that

[e]ach dialogue takes place as if against the background of the responsive understanding of an invisibly present third party who stands above all the participants in the dialogue.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ See also Heil, *Mark*, 187–188. Marcus (*Way of the Lord*, 93) rightly notes that “the word that the disciples are called to hear at the transfiguration (9:7) is above all the word [Jesus] has just uttered in 8:31, the word that prophesies his rejection, suffering, and death, as well as his resurrection.”

⁵⁵ Broadhead (*Mark*, 82) notes that the hearing-reader will recognise the call to obedience. Miller and Miller (*Mark as Midrash*, 227) rightly note that “God’s admonition to [the three disciples] to ‘listen’ to the son is ironic because their hearing has at best been only partially healed.”

⁵⁶ *PT*, 126.

The divine 'voice' is the supreme 'outsider' to the narrative and the one in whom the narrative has its beginning (Mark 1:1) and its recapitulations (Mark 16:7–8).

Significance of the dialogical 'voices'

Peter's 'voice' has called Jesus 'Rabbi', and sought to make (equal) tents for each of the epiphanic characters—thereby unintentionally placing Jesus' 'voice' on the same level as that of Moses and Elijah. The divine 'voice' corrects Peter's 'voice' and shows the uniqueness of Jesus' 'voice': Peter, James and John are to *listen* to Jesus' 'voice'.⁵⁷ Jesus' 'voice' has previously indicated the divine necessity of suffering death and resurrection; his 'voice' therefore affirms what the divine 'voice' has clearly decreed. In turn, the divine 'voice' approves Jesus' 'voice'. The withdrawal of the 'voices' of Moses and Elijah (through whom the divine 'voice' has spoken during their own lifetimes) attests to the divine 'voice' now being connected only with Jesus' 'voice'. The disciples, together with the hearing-reader, are now 'on the road' to Jesus' passion. The silence of Jesus' 'voice' calls the disciples, and the hearing-reader, to continue to wrestle with the question of Jesus' true identity, and to recall the redefinition by Jesus' 'voice' of the nature of glory being by way of suffering. That Jesus' 'voice' is not heard, nor the divine 'voice' heeded, becomes evident in the next section, when James' and John's 'voices' need again to be corrected by Jesus' 'voice'; and also in the passion narrative when Peter's 'voice' is raised in strident denial of Jesus' 'voice'.

Bakhtin and the Blind Disciples (Mark 10:32–52)

The miracle at Mark 10:46–52 is the last miracle of Jesus (if the cursing of the fig-tree is seen as symbolic action rather than miracle), and thus it is climactic.⁵⁸ The whole section of Mark that deals with

⁵⁷ Heil (*Mark*, 188) appropriately notes "The final response to the epiphany remains in suspense: will the disciples truly 'listen' to the 'beloved Son' and understand?"

⁵⁸ See Hurtado *Mark*, 173. Kee (*Community*, 34) rightly sees the miracles in this section of Mark as heavily "overlaid with symbolic meaning for Mark." Ernest Best (*Following Jesus: discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*, JSNTSupp 4, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981, 141), considers the episode as "a symbol of the unbeliever who as such is blind but who is saved when his 'eyes' are opened." Edwards (*Mark*, 331) sees "the healing

being ‘on the road’ has been concerned with the identity of Jesus and the nature of discipleship. James and John are painted in a very poor light, as they represent the third occasion on which the disciples have responded inappropriately to the understanding of Christology and discipleship, as contained within the increasingly articulated passion predictions (Mark 10:33–34, cf. 8:31 and 9:31). Yet, while their failure is even more marked than with the blind beggar they would subsequently encounter, it is probably inadequate to represent the two episodes as total opposites. Contrary to the predominant view that Bartimaeus reflects a clear-sighted understanding of Jesus’ identity, and his response represents true discipleship,⁵⁹ the suggestion here is that Mark’s portrayal is rather more complex and ambivalent. Bartimaeus’ understanding of Jesus’ identity is flawed, and tacitly rejected by Jesus; and while his response in following Jesus may compare favourably with the other blind disciples—James and John especially, and even Peter and the rest of the Twelve—Bartimaeus has no more capacity for true discipleship than anyone else. Bartimaeus becomes fully sighted physically, but at best remains as partially sighted into the true identity of Jesus—and the nature of discipleship—as the rest of the disciples.

of Bartimaeus [as] surely the sum and center of all that Mark desires to convey about faith and discipleship.” But Edwards is therefore assuming that Bartimaeus is an ideal disciple—an assumption that is open to question.

⁵⁹ Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 319), are typical of the majority of commentators who suggest a transition from the difficulty of seeing things clearly at Mark 8:22–26 to clear-sighted faith in the Bartimaeus narrative. Broadhead (*Mark*, 88) notes the discipleship elements in Jesus calling Bartimaeus, the address to Jesus as teacher, the declaration that his faith has healed him; and the final phrase, where he sees and begins to follow Jesus in the way as the ideal disciple. Joel F. Williams (*Other followers of Jesus: minor characters as major figures in Mark’s Gospel*, JSNTSupp 102, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994, 151) sees the exemplary nature of Bartimaeus’ character. Paul Achtemeier (“‘And he followed him’: miracles and discipleship in Mark 10:46–52,” *Semeia* 11, 1978, 115–145) sees the story of Bartimaeus as a paradigm for discipleship. See also Painter, *Mark*, 153. Heil (*Mark*, 218) considers him a model for faith. Best (*Following Jesus*, 136) regards Bartimaeus as a true disciple. France (*Mark*, 422, 425) also considers that Bartimaeus “functions as an example of discipleship,” and that the reader is encouraged to identify with and join him on the road. Edwards’s claim (*Mark*, 328) that Bartimaeus “ironically sees Jesus more clearly than those with two good eyes” is open to conjecture: the appellation ‘Son of David’ indicates a partial penetration of Jesus’ identity, but it is more likely that his use of the title is to solicit alms than as a christological expression of faith! Williamson (*Mark*, 197) rightly remarks that Bartimaeus is not, in fact an ideal disciple since “[a]t the cross, he, with all the other disciples, will flee. Yet . . . Bartimaeus’ perception as an outsider stands in vivid contrast to the blindness of the disciples as insiders.” Less likely, perhaps, is Trainor’s conclusion that he functions typologically for the apostate’s quest to return to the church (*Quest for home*, 155–56).

Dialogue with the text

At Mark 10:46, there is some conjecture whether τυφλὸς προσαίτης, ἐκάθητο παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν is the best textual reading, given that προσαίτης is so rare, and occurring as a late-Greek word.⁶⁰ It is the preferred reading here, however, not just because of the manuscript evidence but because it is consistent with Markan characterisation elsewhere, and also sets the subsequent action in place as a movement from alongside the road to on the road.

Character-zones

Several speech-utterances indicate dialogical interactions in this passage. Jesus teaches the disciples his ultimate fate with the most extensive of the passion-predictions so far (ἤρξατο αὐτοῖς λέγειν (Mark 10:32)). In apparent response, James and John make a request of Jesus which establishes a dialogue between the brothers and Jesus in which he refuses—or at least dramatically qualifies—their request (λέγοντες... εἶπεν... εἶπαν... εἶπεν... εἶπαν... εἶπεν (Mark 10:35–39)).

The other disciples become indignant, resulting in more teaching from Jesus (ἤρξαντο ἀγανακτεῖν... λέγει (Mark 10:41–42)). Further along 'the road' Bartimaeus loudly seeks to gain Jesus' attention (ἤρξατο κράζειν καὶ λέγειν (Mark 10:47)). This prompts a rebuke from the crowd and a demand for silence which merely prompts an intensification of Bartimaeus' cries (ἐπετίμων... σιωπήσῃ... πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἔκραζεν (Mark 10:48)). Jesus' response is to command the crowd to call him, and the changed response of the crowd is immediately apparent (εἶπεν... φωνοῦσιν... λέγοντες (Mark 10:49)). Jesus asks Bartimaeus what he wants, and the subsequent dialogue between them results in the man being healed because of his faith (ἀποκριθείς... εἶπεν... εἶπεν... εἶπεν (Mark 10:51–52)).

⁶⁰ It does not appear in the eight centuries before the Gospel was written; on only two other occasions in the first century, six times in the second century CE, and the main concentration of its occurrence is not until the 4th century CE (over 30% of all occurrences) and later. (Source CD-ROM *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* search.) This does not necessarily provide sufficient argument against its authenticity, however.

Jesus

Jesus' action in resolutely moving toward Jerusalem is itself a dialogic threshold to which both the disciples and the hearing-reader are drawn.⁶¹ The disciples respond in amazement and fear, even as Jesus undergoes what could be considered to be anticipatory agony.⁶² However, Jesus draws aside the Twelve and instructs them further concerning his previous passion predictions (Mark 10:33–34). This becomes the most detailed of the passion predictions.⁶³ While the first two predictions provoked a response (Peter rebukes Jesus at Mark 8:32, and the disciples demonstrate fear and lack of understanding at Mark 9:32) here the response is not indicated until Mark 10:35–40. The resulting narrative suspense causes the hearing-reader to question whether the disciples will yet understand and follow. Shortly thereafter, the question will be again answered negatively.⁶⁴

Jesus calls the disciples to selfless service as the only true understanding of the significance of his own life and death. This saying strongly suggests elements of carnival: the inversion of normal positions of power. Such carnival inversions of social ranks and normal social interaction have close connection with the carnival concept of 'pregnant death'—a theme that Jesus has just expounded upon in his third passion prediction. The prediction of his 'rising up' from death after three days is a potent 'pregnant death' element. At the level of the carnivalesque the passion-predictions function to introduce Jesus

⁶¹ So also Cranfield (*Mark*, 335), who indicates that this resolute facing of danger may have been a comfort to Roman Christians facing persecution. Gundry (*Mark*, 574) considers this unlikely however.

⁶² So Vincent Taylor, *Mark*, 437. By contrast, Gundry (*Mark*, 108) indicates that the disciples' awe was in response to the sense of divine power surrounding Jesus especially since the Transfiguration. Craig A. Evans, (*Mark 8:27–16:20*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001, 108) also notes that the disciples often were "afraid when in the presence of the numinous." But there is scant evidence in the narrative to support such conclusions. Their amazement and fear is more likely to be a response to Jesus' resolute movement to Jerusalem and their apprehension at the potential outcome.

⁶³ Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 438) notes that the actions referred to in Mark 10:34 are paralleled in the Passion narrative ἐμπαίζω (Mark 15:20, 31), ἐμπτύω (Mark 14:65, 15:19); μαστιγῶ (Mark 15:15 uses φραγελλῶ instead); and thus Vincent Taylor suggests it indicates support for the view that the passage is a *vaticinium ex eventu*. Cf. also Best *Following Jesus*, 120. The use of φραγελλῶ instead of μαστιγῶ here is a reason Evans (*Mark*, 109) favours the independence and authenticity of the prediction from the fulfillment narrative, and therefore opposes the view that it is a *vaticinium ex eventu*. Schweizer, (*Mark*, 219) notes that it is likely that this passion prediction "did not originate with Jesus but with the Jewish-Christian church."

⁶⁴ See Heil, *Mark*, 212.

as a self-proclaimed carnival clown, and to outline the nature of the carnival abuse that will later occur.

The Markan Jesus speaks of his life being offered as a ransom for many—a comment that has often been considered to reflect later influence.⁶⁵ Third-level dialogue gives an intriguing intertextual reference to the idea of offering a ransom as a present in *Callirhoe* 3.6.7—a text considered contemporaneous with Mark—in which Chaereas muses on his hope to have won over the man who is Callirhoe's master by offering a ransom for her.⁶⁶ The concept is thus not so foreign to popular culture as to necessitate its interpretation as a later theological rubric.

It is as they approach 'on the road' Jesus' ultimate destiny of suffering and death that they encounter the blind man. Jesus, in stopping and calling the blind man,

shows his authority by having those who had been trying to silence Bartimaeus in Mark 10:48, (perhaps his own disciples as in Mark 10.13) now serve as his messengers.⁶⁷

Jesus' question to Bartimaeus, as also to James and John, is effectively identical: Τί θέλετέ [με] ποιήσω ὑμῖν; (Mark 10:36) Τί σοι θέλεις ποιήσω; (Mark 10:51). At second-level dialogue, the contrast drawn for the hearing-reader is that the sons of Zebedee walk on Jesus' road to his passion but are blind to its significance; whereas the son of Timaeus sits by the road and wants to see. Jesus does not touch the blind man (by contrast with previous healings) but speaks his healing, declaring that Bartimaeus' faith has saved him.⁶⁸ When Jesus has healed him, the once-blind man chooses to follow Jesus on the road to his passion.

At third-level dialogue, the designation of Jesus as ὁ Ναζαρηνός (Mark 10:47) at his last miracle, and Ναζαρηνέ in the first miracle at Mark 1:24 may suggest more than his place of origin. There is an intertextual connection with Samson (Judges 16:17), so that, as Edwards suggests,

⁶⁵ Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 445) provides a helpful excursus on the various interpretations given to λύτρον at Mark 10:45.

⁶⁶ *Callirhoe* 3.6.7 “παρὰ δεσπότου μὲν γὰρ ἡλιπίζον σε κομίσασθαι καὶ τοῖς λύτροις ἐπίστευον ὅτι πείσω τὸν ἀγοράσαντα.”

⁶⁷ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 318.

⁶⁸ Evans (*Mark*, 134) notes that “salvation, therefore, can refer to deliverance from physical danger, from spiritual oppression, or from the consequences of sin.” Best, (*Following Jesus*, 141) indicates the close relationship of salvation and sight.

the term “may also carry connotations of Jesus’ powerful anointing by God.”⁶⁹

Other disciples

Sometimes the Twelve constitute the other disciples (they are amazed (Mark 10:32)); and at another point in this narrative, it is the ‘other Ten’ as against James and John, who comprise this group. They are indignant at the request of James and John (Mark 10:41) and their response causes Jesus to engage them in further instruction concerning the nature of greatness.⁷⁰ But this teaching seems to have excluded James and John, as it appears to be a response to their indignation.⁷¹ Certainly, after the third passion prediction, they follow in fear (Mark 10:32)—which links at third-level dialogue with the women fleeing in fear from the tomb. In the Bartimaeus pericope, the mention of the presence of the disciples is unnecessary, yet their presence increases the significance of the dialogic threshold concerning discipleship.⁷²

Followers

This group is referred to in Mark 10:32, and could perhaps be considered to be part of another group—either the disciples (in the wider sense, recognising that there is no specific narrowing to the Twelve until later in the verse) or the crowd generally. Given that they are said to follow him—despite their reaction of fear—is indicative that they belong more properly to the former group. These followers, while mentioned only in passing, clearly respond to the dialogic threshold created by Jesus. That they follow is also a second-level dialogue prompting the hearing-reader to reflect that throughout Mark to this point, ἀκολουθέω

⁶⁹ Edwards, *Mark*, 329. See Evans, *Mark*, 132, for an examination of the various usages in the New Testament.

⁷⁰ Heil (*Mark*, 214) notes the indignation of the other disciples at the arrogance of James and John. Williamson (*Mark*, 192) notes the possibility that the anger of the other disciples “may masquerade as moral indignation at James’s and John’s ambition, but the picture of the disciples throughout Mark’s Gospel leads the [hearing-reader] to suspect that the other ten are angry because they want those places for themselves. Jesus’ words in the following instruction on discipleship show that he so interprets the situation.”

⁷¹ Schweizer (*Mark*, 219) considers whether this might be indicative of “strained relations between the sons of Zebedee and others in the leadership of the early church,” although this is perhaps unlikely. But Heil (*Mark*, 214) suggests that all Twelve were summoned together for this instruction.

⁷² So Best (*Following Jesus*, 141), who considers the introduction of the disciples here was to “create a ‘discipleship’ atmosphere.”

has always referred to the action of disciples following Jesus, or to Jesus' teaching about the nature of discipleship. The hearing-reader is therefore drawn to the threshold and enjoined to follow *even though afraid*.

James and John

Together with Peter, these two comprise the special inner core of three disciples who have had the opportunity to witness Jesus' power and glory to a greater extent than the others (for example the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37), and the Transfiguration at Mark 9:2). Yet, like Peter who failed at the Transfiguration, James and John fail to understand the nature of Jesus' ministry and proclamation: here they make a selfish request for special places of honour and power.⁷³ Having witnessed Jesus' glory in the Transfiguration, they wish to participate in Jesus' glory; yet clearly they have not understood Jesus' 'voice' (nor the endorsement by the divine 'voice') that Jesus' glory would be by way of drinking his cup and undergoing his baptism.⁷⁴ The choice of the epithet 'Teacher' on their lips is particularly ironic, since they have clearly failed to learn Jesus' lessons on service and suffering.⁷⁵ At second-level dialogue, therefore, the hearing-reader is called to resist the temptation to seek prestige and to follow the model of selfless service shown by Jesus.⁷⁶

At third-level dialogue, the hearing-reader would note in the references to cup and baptism, the intertextual echoes of numerous references in the Hebrew Scriptures that evoke the nature of Jesus' suffering: Job 22:11; Psalms 11:6; 16:5; 22:5; 42:7; 69:2,15; 74:9; 75:8; 115:4, 116:13;

⁷³ Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 440) canvasses the different understandings of the seats on the right and left. He concludes that James and John "had entirely failed to apprehend the teaching concerning Messianic suffering; their minds still moved in the circle of contemporary beliefs." Evans (*Mark*, 118) perceptively notes the irony that it will be the thieves rather than the brothers who will ultimately be crucified on Jesus' right and left. Hurtado (*Mark*, 171) rightly sees this incident as "another instance of Mark's portrayal of the Twelve as fumbling, failing disciples, who serve as a warning to the readers to be sure of their own understanding of and obedience to Jesus' teaching."

⁷⁴ Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 440–441) notes that the cup meant more than martyrdom, and involves the idea of "Messianic redemptive suffering." Heil (*Mark*, 214) sees the cup as a metaphor meaning "to undergo the fate or destiny of painful suffering that God has allotted" and the baptism referring to "the way one is totally overwhelmed and submerged by extremely violent suffering leading to death." Hurtado (*Mark*, 171) notes that the cup and baptism are Jesus' terms "that describe [the coming ordeal] as a divinely ordained fate for him... The confident reply of the two brothers... is full of irony."

⁷⁵ As Broadhead (*Mark*, 87) rightly notes.

⁷⁶ See Heil, *Mark*, 216.

Isaiah 43:2; 51:17–22, Jeremiah 25:15–28; 32; 49:12; 51:7; Lamentations 4:21; Ezekiel 23:31–34, Jonah 2:3–6. There is also third-level dialogue with other Graeco-Roman references,⁷⁷ for example *Leucippe and Clitophon* 3.21.4: “καὶ οἱ μὲν ὁρῶντες δοκοῦσι βαπτίζεσθαι τὸν σίδηρον κατὰ τοῦ σώματος.” Several instances occur in *Callirhoe*, the most notable being two occasions concerning the conflict Dionysius experiences. The passion that ‘baptizes’ him, and his honourable resistance, suggest a baptism of emotional suffering.⁷⁸ The hearing-reader is thus encouraged by Mark to note that ‘cup’ and ‘baptism’ involved more than participating in eucharistic and baptismal rites.⁷⁹

Bartimaeus

Bartimaeus is “the only person healed in the Synoptic Gospels whose name is given.”⁸⁰ The conjecture surrounding his name and its explanation has ranged from the mundane (it being a translation for a Gentile audience,⁸¹ or it being a later addition)⁸² to the rather speculative—an indication that the name has a symbolic connotation associated with the Platonic dialogue with Timaeus, as an indication of salvation for the Gentiles⁸³ or that Bartimaeus means ‘Son of the unclean’ and he functions as a tempter to Jesus.⁸⁴ Rather than struggling to find a meaning for the name, however, it seems that the naming itself functions as

⁷⁷ Twenty-seven references to ‘baptism’ occur in the romances, with the majority relating to ships sinking or similar examples of submersion. The examples indicated are the most interesting in providing an alternative understanding that is largely contemporaneous with Mark. (Source: CD-ROM *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* search).

⁷⁸ (*Callirhoe* 2.4.4) “τότ’ ἦν ἰδεῖν ἀγῶνα λογισμοῦ καὶ πάθους. καίτοι γὰρ βαπτίζόμενος ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας γενναῖος ἀνὴρ ἐπειρᾶτο ἀνέχεσθαι. καθάπερ δὲ ἐκ κύματος ἀνέκυπτε” (3.2.6) “Διονύσιος δὲ ἀνὴρ πεπαιδευμένος κατεῖληπτο μὲν ὑπὸ χειμῶνος καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐβαπτίζετο, ὅμως δὲ ἀνακύπτειν ἐβιάζετο καθάπερ ἐκ τρικυμίας τοῦ πάθους.”

⁷⁹ Hurtado (*Mark*, 177) suggests that “Mark may have been concerned that his readers might have thought they knew what being a Christian meant, when in fact they too were shallow in understanding.”

⁸⁰ Edwards, *Mark*, 328.

⁸¹ See Edwards, *Mark*, 329.

⁸² See Rudolph Bultmann, *The history of the synoptic tradition*, trans. J. Marsh; Oxford: Bilsn Blackwell, 1963, 228; M. Dibelius, *From tradition to gospel*, trans. B. Lee Woolf, Cambridge: James Clarke, 1935, 52.

⁸³ Van Iersel, *Mark*, 340; Tolbert *Sowing*, 189. Yet this seems unlikely as Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 316) conclude. Evans (*Mark*, 131) believes it to be an Aramaic rather than Greek name. Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 448) and France (*Mark*, 422) raise the possibility that Bartimaeus or his father may have become familiar characters in the early church.

⁸⁴ Miller and Miller, *Midrash*, 235. But this reading seems unlikely, and a further example of their overemphasis on the theme of temptation, as discussed previously.

a way of heightening the comparison with the named disciples—James and John.

Markan juxtaposition of this healing with the narratives about the disciples' desire for honour and precedence creates a positive picture of discipleship. Jesus asks both James and John and also Bartimaeus, what they would have him do for them. The contrast is drawn between the request for positions of power and glory by the two 'disciples' and the desire for sight in order to follow Jesus on the road by the newly-sighted 'disciple'.⁸⁵ At second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader is called to choose between the blind man who sees Jesus' identity—at least to some extent—and the disciples who are blind to the significance of Jesus' passion. There is an ironic contrast drawn between Bartimaeus and the disciples in terms of blindness and sight.⁸⁶

Bartimaeus' 'voice' will not be silenced by the 'voices' of the crowd—his cry for mercy from Jesus becomes louder and more insistent. It seems possible that Bartimaeus is initiating an honour-challenge to Jesus: he calls to Jesus, as David's son, and therefore a person of significance, to have mercy on—even pay an interpersonal obligation to—someone whose social position is in diametric opposition. As David's son Jesus has a debt of interpersonal obligation to those within Israel's house who recognise and honour him. Bartimaeus' insistent recognition of David's son affords him an opportunity to receive from him. Fundamentally, at this early point, he is asking for alms, and probably hoping to 'shame' Jesus into giving to him;⁸⁷ it is only later when he encounters Jesus at the threshold that his request is for healing.

It is the hearing-reader, at second-level dialogue, who may realize that Bartimaeus is not the ideal disciple that some suggest him to be.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ See Williamson, *Mark*, 196. Heil (*Mark*, 217) suggests that "the reader is alerted to compare blind Bartimaeus... with the disciples, especially with James and John... who have just demonstrated a certain 'blindness' to the necessity and significance of Jesus' suffering and death."

⁸⁶ See Broadhead (*Mark*, 88), but note earlier discussion concerning the difficulties in seeing this as ideal discipleship. Schweizer, (*Mark*, 225) notes, "When a man's eyes have been opened by a divine miracle, he can see what is happening in Jesus and can 'follow Jesus on the road.' This is the only way a man can understand what now will be made known—the pathway of the Son of Man in suffering."

⁸⁷ Contra Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 318.

⁸⁸ Contra Edwards (*Mark*, 328), for example, who heads this whole section 'A model disciple' and notes that no-one else in Mark 10 "demonstrates the faith, insight, and discipleship of Bartimaeus." By contrast, Watts (*Isaiah's New Exodus*, 251) perceptively notes the subsequent disappearance of Bartimaeus from the narrative, and concludes that he "is no more a 'true disciple' than Peter: both 'blind' men have made imperfect

His cries to Jesus-as-Son-of-David are initially ignored by Jesus—as indicated by the fact of his beginning to cry out (Mark 10:47) and the injunction by many for him to be silent (Mark 10:48). Perhaps Jesus is rejecting the ‘mask’ that Bartimaeus is offering him: Jesus will not be defined as Son of David in the sense that the people would like to have seen.⁸⁹ This pericope becomes a final example, before the Passion narrative, of incomplete or inadequate understandings of the nature of Jesus’ identity. Despite the inadequacy of Bartimaeus’ understanding, he hears Jesus calling him, as relayed also by those who had been seeking to silence him.

Fortified by the potent ‘call’ of Jesus, he ‘throws aside’ his beggar’s ‘cloak,’ a symbol of his immobilization as a blind man, jumps up from his sitting position and ‘comes’ to Jesus (10:50).⁹⁰

Such dramatic action at Mark 10:49, where the blind man is cheered by the crowd and then he throws off his beggar’s cloak (Mark 10:50), suggest elements of carnival here. Intriguingly, the reference to discarding his cloak (ἱμάτιον) would imply that he now only wears an

confessions and even though both follow in ‘the way’ there is nothing in the text to suggest that either have grasped the truth that the Messiah must die or its significance.”

⁸⁹ Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 319) suggest prophetic insight on Bartimaeus’ part. “His choice of the epithet ‘Son of David’ evokes Jesus’ royal lineage as well as contemporary Jewish traditions about Solomon as magician and healer.” See also Hurtado, *Mark*, 178. But this seems less likely, as France (*Mark*, 423) notes. Bartimaeus’ usage is probably functional rather than prophetic. Even if Bartimaeus was suggesting Jesus was Messiah, there is no certainty that his understanding of the term approached any kind of christological understanding. It is more likely a flattering form of address (see France *Mark*, 423, who considers this possibility). Hurtado (*Mark*, 174) suggests that Mark appears to have considered the term inadequate. Hurtado contends that it “was both proper to apply to Jesus and yet incomplete in describing his full significance.” Evans (*Mark*, 132) suggests that Bartimaeus’ use of the phrase may relate to his having “sensed the approach of the kingdom of God...and assumed that healings and other blessings were more readily at hand.” Watts (*New exodus*, 287) notes helpfully “that although Jesus does not overtly reject Bartimaeus’ confession he does not explicitly affirm it.” In fact the repudiation of Davidic lineage as an adequate christological assessment (see Mark 12:35–37) suggests that Bartimaeus was incorrect in his use of the title. Marcus gives a masterly survey of the *Davidsohnfrage*, concluding that “[i]n questioning the adequacy of the Davidic image of the Messiah, the Markan Jesus points to a divine sonship and cosmic exaltation as the true horizons of the Messiah’s identity.” (*Way of the Lord*, 151).

⁹⁰ Heil, *Mark*, 217. Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 449) observes that his ability “to approach Jesus unaided suggests that his blindness is not total.” By contrast, Evans (*Mark*, 133) considers that Mark “may have assumed that his readers would have understood that the blind man would have been assisted. The severity of his blindness is unknown.” The degree of his disability is not the significant issue however—rather, the focus appears to be on his *response*.

undergarment or tunic (χιτών),⁹¹ which creates a potential link with the young man who flees naked at Jesus' arrest (Mark 14:51–52). The carnivalesque touch of having a blind man appear before Jesus in his undergarment lends an element of the comic to the scene.

It is only when Bartimaeus has been asked by Jesus the same words that were asked of James and John, and when he has used a different form of address and offered a request in faith (Ραββουνι, ἵνα ἀναβλέψω) (Mark 10:51), that Jesus will meet Bartimaeus at the threshold. Much is also made of the fact Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the road; yet if Bartimaeus were truly a model disciple, traces of his presence at Gethsemane and at the Cross would have been evident. Bartimaeus certainly becomes a foil for the disciples in that his response contrasts positively with that of James and John, and he may evidence a level of 'sightedness' lacking on the part of the disciples and especially Peter. He moves from being beside the road to being 'on the road,' which Edwards maintains represents the "difference between being an outsider and an insider, a bystander and a disciple."⁹² Yet even he has clearly not fully penetrated the nature of true discipleship nor of the true identity of the one to be followed.

Third-level dialogue elicits echoes from Isaiah 42:18 in Bartimaeus' choice of address, his request, and the healing that follows.⁹³ There are also co-textual contrasts between Bartimaeus and the wealthy man of Mark 10:17–22.⁹⁴ The reference to discarding the garment may be

⁹¹ Contra Edwards (*Mark*, 330), who notes the garment, but makes no comment concerning it. Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 449) notes that Mark alone describes such spirited action as discarding the cloak. Gundry (*Mark*, 594) suggests that "flinging aside the cloak and jumping up lends an element of drama to the event." France (*Mark*, 424) considers that it "serves no purpose in the story except to make it more vivid." Hurtado (*Mark*, 175) considers that the use of such vivid description "indicates that [Mark] wished to make the accounts prominent and effective in impressing upon the reader his portrait of Jesus... [so that] the readers are no doubt to see their own illumination and salvation prefigured in the curing of the man." Moloney (*Mark*, 210) perceptively observes that, in discarding the garment, Bartimaeus "leaves his only vestige of dignity by the side of the road."

⁹² Edwards, *Mark*, 329.

⁹³ Williamson (*Mark*, 197) rightly notes that the christological title 'Son of David' becomes "displaced at the crucial moment... by the more appropriate *Rabbouni*... [since] it is no more (nor less) correct a title for Jesus than was Peter's 'Christ' in 8:29." Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 318) merely note that 'Rabbouni' is an emphatic form of 'Rabbi' whereas France (*Mark*, 424) sees "no difference in effect" between the terms.

⁹⁴ As France notes (*Mark*, 422), "it is he, rather than the rich man, who will end up following Jesus ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, with his sight restored, whereas the rich man has gone away 'blind'." Myers (*Binding the strong man*, 282) presents several points of comparison

recalled in the Gethsemane incident where the young man loses his garment and flees naked to avoid following Jesus. Here Bartimaeus has voluntarily discarded his garment, risking semi-nakedness in his desire to follow Jesus—at least for now!

Crowd

The crowd appear to be accompanying Jesus, indicating a substantially larger retinue than merely the Twelve. Initially the crowd (or at least many within it) scolded Bartimaeus, and this becomes a prompt for his persistence,⁹⁵ therefore helping to create the picture of Bartimaeus as a disciple. The ‘crowd’ here seek to silence the acclamation that would shortly be on the lips of the ‘crowd’ lining the streets as Jesus enters Jerusalem (Mark 11:9–10).⁹⁶ The reason for their attempts to silence him could relate to the dangerous nature of the epithet ‘Son of David,’ but more likely because they see him as a nuisance,⁹⁷ or that they wanted to avoid such exuberance getting out of hand.⁹⁸ Another intriguing possibility presents itself, however: if Bartimaeus has issued an honour challenge to Jesus, which Jesus has ignored, the crowd may be seeking to act on Jesus’ behalf to protect his honour. This reading would then be consistent with—but also raising doubts about—the crowd joining in the ‘Son of David’ acclamations at the entry into Jerusalem.

Significance of the dialogical ‘voices’

The ‘road’ section of Mark concludes at this point. The ‘voices’ of the disciples have consistently been raised in objection to, or misunderstanding of, Jesus’ ‘voice’ instructing them concerning the fate that awaits him. The discipleship narrative is delicately poised: can there be an

between the character of the wealthy man and Bartimaeus, and sees such contrasts as having social, economic and political significance.

⁹⁵ Marcus (*Way*, 138) aptly notes the “literary boomerang effect of the [crowd’s] attempt to silence Bartimaeus.”

⁹⁶ See Williamson (*Mark*, 196), who observes how Bartimaeus’ repeated cries to the Son of David are “echoed by the acclamations of the crowd on entering Jerusalem.”

⁹⁷ See Best, *Following Jesus*, 140.

⁹⁸ See Evans, *Mark*, 133.

ideal disciple who will truly follow Jesus.⁹⁹ Bartimaeus' 'voice' seems at first reading to suggest there is such a possibility, evidenced in his sightedness. But his 'voice', although insistent, sounds a dissonant note compared with Jesus' self-revelation of his identity. It is only when he responds at the threshold to Jesus' questioning of him, that he makes a response that will suffice for the miracle to be effected. Jesus' 'voice' commands his sightedness, and Bartimaeus' answering 'voice' is now that of a disciple, albeit one that falls silent thereafter. Perhaps worse still, his 'voice' may be absorbed (or taken up) by the 'voice' of the crowd at the entry calling Jesus 'Son of David'—a 'voice' soon to turn to 'Crucify him.'¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Myers (*Binding the strong man*, 282) pertinently suggests that "[o]nly if the disciples/reader struggles against the internal demons that render us deaf and mute, only if we renounce our thirst for power—in a word, only if we recognize our blindness and seek true vision—then can the discipleship adventure carry on." Moloney (*Mark*, 211) correctly notes that "[b]y calling Bartimaeus, motion restarts for all concerned as he leaps to his feet and comes to Jesus (vv. 49–50). The journey is resumed as a crowd, the disciples...and Bartimaeus follow Jesus on the road to Jerusalem."

¹⁰⁰ While the argument could be made that the 'crucify him' crowd is comprised of Temple police or others sympathetic to the chief priests, and therefore not the same as the earlier crowds, there is no explicit differentiation (at the narrative level) between the crowds.

CHAPTER FIVE

'THRESHOLD' CHRONOTOPE AND TRAGIC CARNIVAL IN MARK 14:43–15:41

Tragic Carnival and the Passion Narrative

While the threshold chronotope has been considered previously, the nature of tragic carnival needs to be addressed. The line between comic and tragic carnival elements is a fine one: carnival wears two faces, being a serio-comical genre.¹ Bakhtin contends that this is what “lies at the very core of the carnival sense of the world—the *pathos of shifts and changes, of death and renewal*.”² Bakhtin reminds us that

the scandal and decrowning of the prince—the carnival king, or more accurately the carnival bridegroom—is consistently portrayed as a *tearing to pieces*, as a typical carnivalistic “sacrificial” dismemberment into parts.³

This is never more clearly evident than in the passion narrative. One question to be considered is whether the presence of carnival laughter is evident in the passion narrative. Bakhtin notes that

[u]nder certain conditions and in certain genres, however, laughter can be reduced. It continues to determine the structure of the image, but it itself is muffled down to the minimum...to the level of irony, humor, and other forms of reduced laughter.⁴

It is interesting to note the high proportion (up to 20%) of verses in the crucifixion narrative that involve mockery; when the full range of this irony is also considered, it is evident then that carnival laughter,

¹ As mentioned earlier, since the carnivalesque is a serio-comical ‘genre’, the tragic element could be expected to dominate in the passion narrative. Yet the ‘tragic’ carnival is not monolithically serious, and neither is the passion narrative. Bernstein (*Bitter carnival*, and “Poetics of Ressentiment”) argues for revenge as a key characteristic of bitter carnival, but does not recognise that bitter carnival is a contradiction in terms: no matter how sombre there is always a level of “muffled laughter,” as Bakhtin notes (*PDP*, 164–165).

² *PDP*, 124.

³ *PDP*, 162.

⁴ *PDP*, 164–165.

although muffled, is not suppressed. Most of the character speech in the Passion narrative could be considered ironic, and this is hardly surprising. Ironies in the passion narrative are both verbal and dramatic: the characters other than the Markan Jesus are the main speakers, they often make comments that they intend ironically; in fact, the irony is often dramatic in the sense that Jesus really is who they say he is (such as at 14:61, 15:39). While there are some who would consider an ironic reading of the passion narrative to be unnecessary,⁵ an understanding of the carnivalesque influence within the passion would clearly indicate the presence of reduced laughter evidenced in *pervasive* irony. The presence of “[r]educed laughter . . . by no means excludes the possibility of sombre colors within a work.”⁶

An intriguing possibility presents itself: Bakhtin speaks—albeit briefly and with characteristic ambiguity—of “[i]rony as a form of silence.”⁷ It would seem likely that this phrase connects with Bakhtin’s claim that “the primary author clothes himself (sic) in *silence*. But this silence can assume various forms of expression, various forms of reduced laughter (irony), allegory, and so forth.”⁸ This silence can prompt the hearing-reader to seek to ‘finalize’ the meaning of the narrative; yet to do so is to risk prematurely terminating the dialogue with the text. Is it possible that irony-as-a-form-of-silence is evident especially in the passion narrative? Certainly, if the centurion’s comment at the foot of the cross is viewed ironically, it becomes a final silence concerning the identity of Jesus (15:39). The silences of the Markan Jesus are also heavily ironic: his refusal to respond to Pilate’s questioning concerning his identity (15:2–5) indicates the refusal of one character to acknowledge the political framework of the other character’s question, and this is especially ironic for the hearing-reader who knows the real answer to the questions. His silence when faced with the ironic jibes of the Jewish leaders encouraging him to prophesy (14:65) when they are in the act of fulfilling his prophecies of 8:31, 9:31, 10:33, or when he is being acknowledged as ‘king’ by the soldiers (15:17–19), is similarly ironic. But even beyond the level of the characters, irony-as-a-form-of-silence

⁵ For example, Gundry (*Mark*, 1) maintains that “Mark’s meaning lies on the surface” *pace* Fowler (*Reader*, chapter 7), who has a helpful description of the range and extent of Markan irony.

⁶ *PDP*, 166.

⁷ *N70*, 134.

⁸ *N70*, 149.

can relate most significantly to the author—that is, it becomes a device of second-level dialogue. The passion narrative may reflect levels of opacity that may be deliberate on the part of the author.⁹ What happens to various characters who remain in a form of narrative suspension (e.g. Judas, Peter, the young man) is a question that continues to be asked.¹⁰ Out of this silence, the dialogue with the hearing-reader continues, permeated by the dimensions of tragic carnival, and finding its most profound expression in the threshold established here in the passion narrative.

Bakhtin & Jesus' Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion (Mark 14:43–15:41)

There are multiple speech-utterances occurring throughout the Passion narrative, and a significant reason for *not* isolating such speech-utterances relates to the potential in the Passion narrative for irony-as-a-form-of-silence. Thus, the definition of a speech-utterance needs to be widened beyond the combination of verbal markers (and 'voices' in the text) that has been the approach in previous chapters. Rather than highlight them here, they will be addressed in terms of the specific character-zones. While some character-zones operate within a small section of the narrative, others occur more frequently; accordingly, they will be considered in terms of order of appearance in the narrative.

Dialogue with the text

The cock-crow references at Mark 14:68, and at Mark 14:72 have caused some debate.¹¹ Does the external evidence of their presence¹²

⁹ Fowler (*Reader*, 162) comments: "Sometimes I, the reader...stare blankly at a veil of opacity that keeps me from seeing or hearing what characters in the story apparently do see or hear. Reading Mark's Gospel gives the reader the opportunity to experience both sides of the veil of opacity from time to time. This is a major reason why the experience of reading Mark's Gospel does not result in the resolution and clarity that we frequently achieve even in works deeply committed to indirection."

¹⁰ Auerbach (*Mimesis*, chapter 2), questions how the Markan author can have neglected so much 'necessary' detail.

¹¹ Evans (*Mark*, 465) sees v68 as most likely a scribal gloss. By contrast, Gundry (*Mark*, 889) argues for the reference at v68, and therefore for the inevitability of Peter's continued denials, despite hearing the first cock-crow.

¹² 14:68 A C D Θ Ψ^c 067 *f*^{1.13} (1424) ℣ lat sy^{p,h} sa^{mss} bo^{ms} Eus; 14:72 ⚭ B C* D L W Θ 0250 *f*¹³ 565 700 *al* latt sy^p sa^{mss} bo^{ms}.

indicate copyist insertions intended to support a literal fulfilment of the prophecy of the Markan Jesus at Mark 14.30? Or does the absence in other textual witnesses¹³ suggest deletion by other copyists wanting to harmonize with the other Synoptic parallels that have one crowing? The former reading is preferred here, despite the inconclusive nature of the conflicting possibilities. The presence of multiple cock-crow references serves at the narrative level to heighten the level of disloyalty expressed by the Markan Peter: at the first occasion he could be expected to flee with the memory of Jesus' prediction. Peter's continued failure is consistent with the Markan portrayal of him elsewhere in the Gospel. In the passion narrative, more than anywhere else, the extent of the abandonment of the Markan Jesus—leading to his 'words of dereliction'—is portrayed as absolute. Peter's denial, accordingly, will be seen here in maximal terms.

At Mark 15:1, there is an apparent stylistic improvement by 'Western' and Caesarean witnesses.¹⁴ The important thing is that there is not another Council convened—the council had already been convened.¹⁵ In this way, at the level of the narrative plane, the ongoing trial of Jesus—the faithful Suffering Servant—contrasts with the lack of faithfulness shown under pressure by Peter.

At Mark 15:12, the textual evidence is ambiguous with strong manuscript evidence against the inclusion of *θέλετε*¹⁶ as a secondary reading; although other texts support it.¹⁷ Taken together with the variants later in the same verse, the inclusion of *θέλετε* gives an important insight into the character of Pilate. The external evidence against *ὃν λέγετε τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων*¹⁸ rather than simply *τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων*¹⁹ is strong, although the UBS committee noted that the Matthean reading at Matt 27:22 supports the originality of the phrase in Mark. While it may be argued that it is a scribal amelioration, however, its presence is consistent with the Markan portrayal of Pilate. Recognising the motivation of the chief priests (Mark 15:10), Pilate's attribution of the title to them would be a deliberate provocation.

¹³ 14:68 *κ B L W Ψ** 892 *pc c sy^s cop^{sa,bo}*.

¹⁴ D Θ 565 *pc it*.

¹⁵ As in *κ C L* 892.

¹⁶ *κ B C Δ Ψ f^{1,13}* 33 892 *pc sa^{ms} bo*.

¹⁷ A D Θ 0250 *℣ latt sy* (and with *ἴνα* 1424 *pc, c*).

¹⁸ *κ C Ψ* 0250 *℣ sy^{ph} cop^{bo}*.

¹⁹ B [although this involves a unique variant] A D W Θ *f^{1,13}* 565 700 *pc lat sy^s co^{sa}*.

In Mark 15:27–29, it will be assumed that the earliest and most reliable witnesses are accurate in the absence of Mark 15:28. It is unlikely that Mark would alter his normal pattern of rarely quoting the Hebrew Scriptures to include an unnecessary reference that states the obvious for no significant reason. The Markan Jesus is seen as the fulfilment of the Hebrew Scriptures without explicit reference to them.

The inclusion of κράζας at Mark 15:39²⁰ may be an interpolation from Matt 27:50. It is questionable whether reference to the centurion hearing his cry provides any additional clarification of the nature of the centurion's response. The contention here will be that the centurion's statement is meant ironically: watching the manner of Jesus' death even without noting his cry would be sufficient for a Roman centurion to comment sardonically.

Character-zones

Jesus

From the time of the arrest, the Markan Jesus speaks only four times: Mark 14:48–49, Mark 14:62, Mark 15:2, Mark 15:34. In a dialogic sense, his silences establish thresholds with the other characters' speech, and these will be addressed when considering such characters; yet the few times that he *does* speak become critically important. Initially, at Mark 14:48–49, Jesus questions the validity of treating him as ληστής (robber; or in an alternative sense 'political rebel') when he has clearly not acted in such a manner.²¹

His response to the arresting crowd is indignant and ironic.²² As first level dialogue, it functions as an effective rebuke, with the hint that the

²⁰ The majority of witnesses include some form of κράζας: A C D W Θ f^{1,13} 565 M lat sy, while the earlier witnesses omit it: B L Ψ 892 pc sa (bo).

²¹ Belo (*Lecture matérialiste*, 216) sees ληστής as signifying a terrorist or Zealot. Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 560), Gundry (*Mark*, 860), van Iersel (*Mark*, 440), each prefer bandit, as do Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 416) but with socio-political revolutionary overtones. Heil (*Mark*, 307) prefers robber; Schweizer (*Mark*, 318) chooses outlaw; Evans (*Mark*, 425) prefers insurrectionist (although he notes robber, brigand and rebel as less likely alternatives).

²² Gundry (*Mark*, 860) notes the possible indignation, as do Lane (*Mark*, 526), and Evans (*Mark*, 422); although van Iersel (*Mark*, 439) considers Jesus' comment as ironic (see also Heil (*Mark*, 307) 'reproachful irony'). Schweizer (*Mark*, 318) considers that this saying was more likely addressed to the Sanhedrin at a later point, rather than to the arresting crowd. Gundry (*Mark*, 880) counters this, noting that "had the Sanhedrin dared they would have used the same crowd to arrest Jesus there."

Markan Jesus is suggesting ironically that the ‘subversive’ operation of his capture renders his would-be captors akin to robbers themselves: he characterizes the crowd as robbers since they use clubs and swords despite the fact that such weapons of violence are unwarranted.

As second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader is reminded that Jesus’ daily practice of teaching at the Temple clearly marks him as ‘clean,’ even though the action of the arresting crowd implies that as a ληστής he is unclean. The clean-unclean distinction is therefore once again raised for the hearing-reader, who is encouraged to see that, since Jesus is clearly ‘clean,’ the opposition to him—both now in the arresting band, and throughout the rest of the passion narrative—must therefore be ‘unclean.’ The clean-unclean distinction will continue to arise at points throughout the passion narrative, as it affects specific characters.

As third-level dialogue, Jesus’ comment connects with several intertextual usages of ληστής.²³ In *Vita Apollonii* (1.20.32), Apollonius’ courage is being affirmed for having journeyed through races of barbarians and robbers.²⁴ In the second book, the term clearly means pirates at 2.29.11,²⁵ and 2.29.17. This identification of ληστής with pirates continues in book 3.²⁶ An interesting reference to twelve bandits or robbers facing execution occurs at 5.24.14:²⁷ Apollonius subsequently intervenes to save one of them who was falsely accused. By book 7, Apollonius has drawn comparisons among robbers, poisoners, murderers and burial dancers!²⁸ In *Ephesiaca*, πειρατῶν and λησταί appear to be used interchangeably throughout the first book. In the course of the second book, one of the key characters Hippothous—with his *robber band*—will capture the hero and his associates as they wander in the wood, and much of the rest of that book contains references to Hip-

²³ In the first and second centuries CE, the usage of ληστής and its cognates was considerable: 916 references in 44 texts; of these 21% of references are found in just four Graeco-Roman romances, and more than half of these are in *Callirhoe* and *Ephesiaca*—arguably the earliest of the romances. A further two are found in the aretalogical work *Vita Apollonii*. Interestingly, Josephus—for whom the word had become predominantly associated with insurrectionists—has 15% of the total references.

²⁴ *Vita Apollonii* 1.20.32 “ἢ χρώμενος ὁ Ἀπολλώνιος διεπορεύθη Βάρβαροις ἔθνεσιν καὶ ληστροῖς”.

²⁵ *Vita Apollonii* 2.29.12 “τὰς ἐρωτήσεις τῶν καταπλεόντων ἐποιούντο, εἰ λησταί εἰσιν...”

²⁶ *Vita Apollonii* 3.24.4 “τὴν θάλατταν ποτε τῶν Φοινίκων λησταὶ ὑπεκάθητο...”

²⁷ *Vita Apollonii* 5.24.14 “ἄνδρες ἦγοντο τὴν ἐπὶ θανάτῳ δώδεκα λησταὶ τὴν αἰτίαν...”

²⁸ *Vita Apollonii* 7.23.5–7 “πλουτῶν, οἷον ληστείας ἢ φαρμάκων, ἃ δὲ ἀνδροφύονα, ἢ τάφους κινήσας, ὅσοι τῶν πάλαι βασιλέων εἰσιν...”

pothous and his robber band.²⁹ Yet another band of robbers/pirates capture Anthia in book 3, with similar interchangeability between *πειρατῶν* and *λησταί* and much of the rest of over sixty references throughout *Ephesiaca* is concerned with this capture—often as it was remembered by Anthia. In *Callirhoe*, the word is used several times in the first book³⁰ for thugs/robbers/pirates/brigands associated with the pirate Theron, who, shortly after Callirhoe’s funeral, break into her tomb only to find she has come back to life (!), so they carry her off by ship and sell her at a profit.³¹ The word will recur as part of the recollection of her experiences for most of almost 30 other occurrences of the word throughout the rest of *Callirhoe*. Of curious interest, however, is Chaereas’ comment recounting that he should have been spared what had occurred to him, including being sold, attacked by robbers, put in chains and crucified by a king more cruel even than the cross!³² The points of direct comparison with the Markan passion account are intriguing! Clearly the references to *ληστής* show an understanding that is more commonly associated with bandits, robbers or pirates; the portrayal of such characters is consistently negative. While Josephus uses the term consistently to indicate ‘zealots’ or insurrectionists, it is possible that such usage may reflect his desire to distance himself from such ‘undesirables’ (and former colleagues!) in the eyes of his Roman readership. This pattern of usage may therefore not be evident in the Gospel period; accordingly, it seems appropriate to consider *ληστής* as referring primarily to ‘bandits.’³³

²⁹ *Ephesiaca* 2.11.11 “Τὴν οὖν νύκτα ἐκείνην πλανώμενοι ἐν αὐτῇ [τῇ ὕλῃ] ὑπὸ τῶν περὶ τὸν Ἰππόθοον τὸν ληστήν συνελήφθησαν.”

³⁰ *Callirhoe* 1.7.1, 1.7.5, 1.9.4, 1.9.7, 1.12.1, 1.12.3, 1.13.10, 1.14.8, 1.14.9.

³¹ *Callirhoe* 1.7.1 “Θήρων γὰρ τις ἦν, πανοῦργος ἄνθρωπος, ἐξ ἀδικίας πλέων τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ ληστὰς ἔχων ὑφορμούντας τοῖς λιμέσιν ὀνόματι πορθημίου, πειρατήριον συγκροτῶν.”

³² *Callirhoe* 6.2.10 “εἰ δ’ οὖν, ἐκείμην ταύτῃ <τὰ> μετὰ ταῦτα κερδήσας, τὴν πρᾶσιν, τὸ ληστήριον, τὰ δεσμά, τὸν τοῦ σταυροῦ χαλεπώτερον βασιλέα.”

³³ See also Schweizer (*Mark*, 318), Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 560), Lane (*Mark*, 526), Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 416), Edwards (*Mark*, 439), and France (*Mark*, 595); but contra Evans (*Mark*, 424), who refers extensively to Josephus for evidence of the term referring to insurrectionists. Witherington (*Mark*, 396) also notes Josephus’ usage as meaning zealots, whereas Josephus’ evidence actually supports the indication that in Mark the term refers primarily to bandits: *failed* revolutionaries or insurrectionists *become* bandits or robbers according to those who side with the victors, including Josephus who had ‘recreated’ himself from a former unsuccessful revolutionary into a respectable Roman historian.

In such a context, Jesus' comment may also contain here an implied reference to Isaiah 53:12, concerning being numbered with thieves.³⁴ The reference to robbers also connects intratextually back to the Temple cleansing, where Jesus has accused the Jewish leaders (who have now sent the arresting crowd) of being robbers, since they have turned the Jerusalem temple into a *σπήλαιον ληστῶν*. Thus, at third-level dialogue, the irony is that the arresting crowd have been transformed into robbers by real robbers to capture violently one who is clearly not a robber! The leaders-as-robbers could not arrest Jesus-cast-as-a-robber in broad daylight because of the crowd's favourable reaction to his teaching; they must therefore resort to violent apprehension by the crowd-as-robbers under cover of darkness, arresting Jesus-as-not-a-robber. Jesus then commands (or consents) that the Scriptures must be fulfilled, which becomes a signal or trigger for the disciples to flee.³⁵ At third-level dialogue, this has a clear inter-textual connection with Zechariah 13:7.³⁶

From the perspective of carnival, such comic inversions occur where a respected and popular teacher is cast as a robber, who then inverts the roles of the arresting party so that those who ostensibly uphold the law are re-cast as being lawbreaking robbers. Brief but ineffectual swordplay by an unnamed person, provides another hint of carnival-without-footlights: there may be 'bystanders' but, as Bakhtin reminds us, there are never mere spectators in carnival!³⁷ Whatever the identity of the unnamed person, they are drawn into the action—the consequences of which are a severed body part lying in the dirt while Jesus conducts a conversation with his captors over it (Mark 14:47–49)! The 'trigger' phrase that Jesus utters causes the immediate flight of his disciples, followed closely by a young man fleeing naked: the carnival humour involved with naked flight prevents such abandonment of Jesus from becoming monolithically serious.

³⁴ See also Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 561), Gundry (*Mark*, 861), Lane (*Mark*, 526). Broadhead (*Mark*, 116) helpfully notes the pattern of Jeremiah here who, like Jesus, is arrested after teaching in the Temple (Jer 7:1–15). Taken with the Isaiah reference, Broadhead comments that these images enhance the portrayal of "Jesus as the rejected prophet of God."

³⁵ So Heil (*Mark*, 308), who sees the exclamation of Jesus as a "signal for the disciples to now fulfill their role in God's scriptural plan (14:49)."

³⁶ "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (Zech 13:7) as noted by Heil (*Mark*, 308).

³⁷ *PDP*, 122.

Jesus then faces the trial before the Jewish leaders.³⁸ Again, he maintains silence throughout the testimony of the false witnesses, an indication at third-level dialogue of a connection with the Deutero-Isaianic servant songs (especially at this point Isaiah 53:7), as God's 'suffering servant,' and the 'suffering just one' of Psalm 38:12–14 and Psalm 39:9.³⁹ If, at second-level dialogue, Bakhtin's irony-as-a-form-of-silence operates here, it is particularly effective. Jesus maintains an ironic silence,⁴⁰ because he need not respond to false testimony; yet his capacity to respond to earlier entrapment suggests his capacity to do so now. The author's use of irony here and elsewhere throughout the narrative in relation to Jesus' words (or lack of them), creates a silence that hearing-readers must fill with their own 'voices'. The hearing-reader's 'voice' calls for Jesus' 'voice' to respond to the 'voices' of accusation; but the author maintains the silence until after the resurrection when the hearing-reader is called to return to the beginning (Mark 16:7) to hear again Jesus' 'voice' predicting just such an event (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34).

When Jesus does break the silence (Mark 14:62) he provides the high priest with sufficient evidence for 'conviction' on the charge of blasphemy,⁴¹ and therefore sets in train the predicted course of events that will follow.⁴² Jesus' proclamation of his identity before the high priest

³⁸ Gundry (*Mark*, 893–922) provides an extensive discussion concerning the irregularities (and illegalities) associated with the trial before the Jewish leaders. He concludes that the trial is "unjust or Mark's report of it is exposed as tendentious." Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 427) claim that, although "presented as a real trial, Mark also makes clear that it was rigged."

³⁹ As noted by Painter (*Mark*, 195), Witherington (*Mark*, 384), Heil (*Mark*, 314), Edwards (*Mark*, 446). Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 186–196, provides a masterly treatment of these themes.

⁴⁰ Although Edwards (*Mark*, 445) sees it as strategic rather than ironic.

⁴¹ See also Darrell L. Bock (*Blasphemy and exaltation in Judaism: the charge against Jesus in Mark 14:53–65*, Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, (reprinted) 2000) for a survey of recent interpretations, and extended treatment of the theme, in which he argues that the interpretative key is found in the juxtaposition of Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13.

⁴² David Seeley (*Deconstructing the New Testament*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994, 54) notes that "if [Jesus] merely offered the same sort of rebuttal with which he typically crushed his opponents earlier...he would have a real chance of going free. Instead he is silent (14:61). Though he has often tried to keep his identity hushed up...and has never himself expressed it, Jesus confesses his Messiahship on the one occasion when it is sure to get him killed." Painter (*Mark*, 195) understandably considers it "surprising...that Jesus here admits [his identity] to the hostile high priest when the Gospel resonates with the secrecy motif." Intriguingly, Myers (*Binding*, 376) appears to take the contrary view that Jesus' reply is more of a question ('Am I?') in corresponding mockery to that of the high priest. This seems difficult to sustain from the evidence, however.

creates the ultimate threshold for the Jewish leaders:⁴³ it provokes them to accept Jesus at face value, or instigate his condemnation to death. At second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader is drawn to the threshold to respond to Jesus' self-identification. The hearing-reader could have expected that the Markan Jesus would have uttered a word-with-a-loop-hole in response to the high priest; the hearing-reader is therefore surprised to discover an unambiguous claim concerning Jesus' identity, and must engage in the dialogue with what that might mean. At third-level dialogue, the references to Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 are comparatively overt, and provide the hearing-reader with an enriched understanding of the nature of the Son of Man.⁴⁴ This self-identification is also imbued with carnivalesque irony: Jesus the carnival clown⁴⁵ has finally unmasked himself, but this unmasking is immediately rejected by the Jewish leaders, who try to force a different mask upon him.

Jesus is beaten and told to prophesy, not long after he has accurately prophesied about his betrayal and Peter's denial (14:65).⁴⁶ Note that (contra Matthew 26:68 and Luke 22:64) Jesus is not asked to name prophetically the person who struck Jesus. Instead

Mark touches a deeper note and concentrates on the humiliation of the prisoner who has to endure the added insult of having his prophetic mission the subject of a rude jest.⁴⁷

At second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader is reminded that Jesus' 'voice'—although silent now—is supremely authoritative: his prior

⁴³ Edwards notes helpfully (*Mark*, 447): "In order truly to understand the meaning of his person something has been missing...[namely] the necessity of his suffering. Only in the light of suffering can Jesus openly divulge his identity as God's Son. At the trial the veil is finally removed. The malevolence which the Jewish authorities have harbored since the beginning of Jesus' ministry (3:6) is finally exposed; hence the secret that Jesus has protected since the beginning of his ministry can now be disclosed."

⁴⁴ See Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 164–171, for an excellent discussion of the Markan use of Daniel 7. Marcus notes (171) the "characteristic Markan twist: the Son of man who, in Jewish appropriations of Daniel 7, will condemn the ungodly, is here condemned by them."

⁴⁵ Bakhtin (*FTC*, 161) comments that "[T]he clown and the fool represent a metamorphosis of tsar and god—but the transformed figures are located in the nether world, in death (cf. in Roman Saturnalia and in Christ's passion the analogous feature of the metamorphosis of god or ruler into slave, criminal or fool)."

⁴⁶ Juel, *Mark*, 143, notes the irony that unknown to those taunting Jesus to prophesy, part of his prophecies are being fulfilled at that moment in the courtyard with Peter's denial.

⁴⁷ Ralph P. Martin, *Mark: evangelist and theologian*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973, 180.

prophecy of Peter's denial is coming true at that moment in the courtyard. He need not prophesy to suit the whim of an abusive Council: the hearing-reader knows that Jesus' prophecies concerning the Temple, and the prophetic action of cursing the fig-tree as analogous to the Jewish nation exemplified in their leadership, have been far-reaching prophecies that the Council will not hear. His silence is ironic in that all that needs to be prophesied has been stated already, and is already on the way to fulfilment.

The influence of the carnivalesque is apparent in this mockery, too. While it could be expected that carnival inverts the normally dominant social order, what is apparent here is carnival "*pageantry* of a ritualistic sort."⁴⁸ The beating, spitting and calls to prophesy reveal no indication of the purpose behind the Jewish leaders' actions;⁴⁹ rather the actions themselves are the focus, as part of a ritualistic rejection of Jesus' claims for superiority. To this end, the Jewish leaders are undercutting Jesus' claims by treating him as a carnival fool.

When Jesus appears before Pilate, his response is ambivalent and ambiguous:⁵⁰ he draws Pilate to the threshold, at which he must make his own decision concerning Jesus' identity. At second-level dialogue, however, the hearing-reader will not expect Pilate to cross the threshold any more than anyone else in the Passion; thus the hearing-reader notes the irony that Jesus invites Pilate to play out his role in establishing Jesus' identity precisely in the mockery and ridicule in which Pilate engages.⁵¹ Carnival elements are hinted at in the 'custom' of releasing a prisoner at the feast (15:6): the carnival 'exchange' of one 'son of the father' (Bar-Abbas) with another 'Son of the Father' is one such possibility (15:11). The nature of the carnival exchange, and the basis of Pilate's offer, will be considered further under the discussion concerning Pilate.

At a later point, when Jesus is on the cross, he breaks his silence—but his speech is enigmatic. The 'cry of dereliction' (15:34) is translated into Greek from Aramaic with a characteristic ὁ ἐστιν clause. The onlookers misunderstand, thinking that Jesus is calling for Elijah,

⁴⁸ *PDP*, 122.

⁴⁹ So Gundry, *Mark*, 887.

⁵⁰ Seeley (*Deconstructing*, 54) notes that Jesus "is taken to a not-unsympathetic Pilate, who asks him to answer the charges made against him (15:4). He refuses (15:5). In the end, the impression can hardly be avoided that he is consciously acquiescing in the series of events leading to his death."

⁵¹ Heil, *Mark*, 322.

whereas—knowing Hebrew or Aramaic—perhaps they *should* have realized Jesus was quoting the opening words from Psalm 22.⁵² Therein lies another aspect of irony within the narrative,⁵³ especially since the cry is uttered in a loud voice.⁵⁴ There should be no basis for not clearly hearing the words that are being said, yet the bystanders clearly do not hear Jesus’ ‘voice,’⁵⁵ or they deliberately distort it in their understanding. Yet while the hearing-reader may perceive more than the bystanders (who misinterpret Jesus’ words), the author uses irony-as-a-form-of-silence at this point. The meaning of the quoted words *for the Markan Jesus* has become an issue for continuing debate: even hearing-readers may hear Jesus’ ‘voice’ but not fully understand it!⁵⁶

⁵² Note that Seeley (*Deconstructing*, 55–56) questions whether the Markan audience could be assumed to be familiar with Psalm 22. The discussion concerning the relationship of Psalm 22 with the passion narrative as a whole, and especially the conclusions concerning the degree of perceived abandonment on Jesus’ part, has been considerable and wide-ranging: including Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 594), H. C. Read (“The cry of dereliction” *Expository Times* 65, 1957, 260–262), Schweizer (*Mark*, 353), Cranfield (*Mark*, 298), Lane (*Mark*, 572–573), Williamson (*Mark*, 161), Ernest Best (*Mark: the Gospel as story*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), Thomas E. Boomershine (*Story journey: an invitation to the Gospel as story-telling*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1988, 167–168), Heil (*Mark*, 335–336), Juell (*Mark*, 130), W.R. Telford (*Mark*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995, 107), Raymond Brown (*The death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the grave: a commentary on the Passion narratives in the four Gospels*, ABRL, 2 vols., New York: Doubleday, 1993, 1044–1051), van Iersel (*Mark*, 474–475), Evans (*Mark*, 507), Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 450–451), France (*Mark*, 640). Marcus (*Way of the Lord*, 172–182) provides a full survey of possible allusions and citations of Psalm 22 in Mark 15. The degree of variation among scholarly opinion is indicative of the opacity of the text.

⁵³ Tolbert (*Sowing*, 283) sees the cry itself as ironical since “Jesus addresses his words to the very one whom he claims has deserted him.”

⁵⁴ Painter (*Mark*, 206), maintains that the mention of the loud voice indicates that Jesus was neither exhausted nor near death.

⁵⁵ France (*Mark*, 654) considers that the name may have been misheard because it was “uttered in an agonized shout.” More likely, the ‘confusion’ is indicative of narrative irony, as is clearly drawn by Fowler (*Reader*, 109): “the reader is made to understand exactly what the strange Aramaic words signify, while the characters in the story demonstrate clearly that they thoroughly misunderstand the very same words. No one but the reader understands Jesus’ dying words! In a profound sense, the only genuine witness to the crucifixion in Mark is the reader. This stark incongruity between understanding at the discourse level and misunderstanding at the story level produces a deeply ironic experience for the reader.” (Fowler, *Reader*, 109).

⁵⁶ France (*Mark*, 650) notes that with this cry, Mark “has set up the supreme paradox of his paradoxical story... which Mark leaves unresolved for his readers to work at... But that cry in itself remains unexplained... [and Mark’s] theology of the cross remains expressed in paradox.”

Jesus' final cry⁵⁷—although not in the form of speech—functions to create a threshold at which both the centurion and the divine 'voice' speak in response. The response of the centurion is to make a comment—taken here to be ironic and mocking—and this reinforces the sense of total abandonment of Jesus by all of humanity. By contrast, the response of the divine 'voice' to Jesus' final cry is to tear the Temple curtain separating the Holy of Holies from top to bottom—and this reinforces the judgement of God upon the Temple.⁵⁸

The disciples

At the arrest, those who had initially responded positively to Jesus' 'voice' and left behind (ἀφίημι) everything to follow him (Mark 1:18, 1:20, 10:28), are present with Jesus as he is speaking to them. They now hear the strident 'voices' of the arresting crowd and leave Jesus behind: καὶ ἀφέντες αὐτὸν ἔφυγον πάντες (Mark 14:50).⁵⁹ The inner

⁵⁷ Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 448) note the cry "may simply have been the last shout of someone in great physical pain." Frederick W. Danker ("The demonic secret in Mark: a re-examination of the cry of dereliction (15:34)," *ZNW* 61, 1970, 48–69) maintains that Jesus' "cry of dereliction reveals the depth of Jesus' engagement with Satan—he is possessed by a demon" (67); the final cry is Jesus' own self-exorcism, and this is what the centurion observed. While Danker's 're-examination' remains unconvincing, his conclusions serve to illustrate the power of the ironic silence, at this point and also at the end of the gospel in Mark 16:8, to evoke diverse responses from the hearing-reader.

⁵⁸ See Belo, *Lecture matérialiste*, 229; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 451–452. Contra Edwards (*Mark*, 478–479), who considers the tearing to relate to the end of the separation between God and humanity, and enables the centurion to make his 'confession.' Evans (*Mark*, 509) sees the tearing of the veil to be the result of the force of Jesus' dying shout, although this would seem unlikely. Painter (*Mark*, 207) notes the parallel with the rending of the heavens at the baptism and its association with the descent of the Spirit on Jesus. Here the veil is rent, the Spirit leaves, and therefore the Temple's doom is sealed. See also Witherington, *Mark*, 400. Timothy Geddert (*Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan eschatology*, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989, chapter 5) provides a lengthy list of possible interpretations of the tearing of the veil.

⁵⁹ For a full canvas of the range of views concerning the disciples—especially the collapse of the discipleship narrative at this point—see also the discussion concerning strained relations between the Markan community and the Jerusalem church in Weeden, *Mark*. Weeden sees the disciples as the hermeneutical key to Mark; they function as a polemic against christological opponents within the Markan community. See also Tyson, "Blindness," 261–68; Crossan, "Mark and the relatives," 81–113; and Barton, *Discipleship and family ties*, 16. Werner H. Kelber, ("Mark and oral tradition" *Semeia* 16, 1979, 16) views their use as a polemic against apocalyptic opponents outside the Markan community. Crossan, ("Mark", 111–112) also subscribing to the idea that the purpose of Mark is polemical, nevertheless questions why Mark would use only the disciples as the 'villains' of the christological controversy. He argues that the Markan polemic is not only against a faction within the Markan community, but functions also as "a manifesto from the Markan church, in whole or part, against the jurisdictional (against Jesus' relatives)

circle of three—Peter, James and John—have presumably moved back with Jesus (based on Jesus' command to rise and move to meet the betrayer at Mark 14:42). The parallel with the return of the inner three to the other disciples at the Transfiguration is intriguing: in both cases the disciples are powerless—against the attacking unclean spirit (Mark 9:14–27), and against the attacking (unclean?) arresting mob.

Traditionally, the one who cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant has been associated with Peter (John 18:10) or at least one of the disciple band (Matthew 26:51, Luke 22:49–50), but there is no such mention here.⁶⁰ Given that Mark has usually portrayed Peter rather negatively, it is suggestive that the Gospel writer has not taken the opportunity to place Peter in a bad light at this point. No name has been given to the one 'defending' Jesus, and this too is suggestive.⁶¹ Indeed, the Markan Jesus is silent on the matter, and does not censure the one who struck the blow. Because of the dialogical possibilities, the exchange between the slave and the bystander will therefore be treated separately.

The disciples flee (Mark 14:50), and with the exception of Peter in the courtyard of the high priest, and some women at the cross, the disciple band disappears from the surface of the narrative.⁶² The level of this abandonment of Jesus by the disciples as presented in Mark, should not be overlooked. When Jesus dies, the level of abandonment will be complete: there is no explicit record of the disciples being present at the Cross. Only some women disciples, whose appearance on the

and doctrinal (against the disciples) hegemony of the Jerusalem church." By contrast, E. Best, (*Disciples and discipleship studies in the gospel according to Mark* Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986) notes that the disciples may represent themselves in a 'historical' sense, with Mark's approval or disapproval; they may represent a group claiming a succession to them, with Mark favouring or opposing such groups; they may represent the whole church or a part; or they may be purely informational. Best sees a primarily *pastoral* purpose to the portrayal of the disciples in the Gospel, rather than a *polemical* purpose. The disciples become 'object lessons' of behaviour and doctrine; examples to follow or avoid. Jack Dean Kingsbury (*Conflict in Mark: Jesus, authorities, disciples*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) sees them as both loyal and uncomprehending. R. Tannehill ("The gospel of Mark as narrative christology" *Semeia* 16, 1979, 82–84.) maintains that the disciples represent the Markan readers rather than historical opponents. He sees the reader as being drawn to stand with Jesus rather than the faithless disciples. Malbon (*Company*) sees the disciples as a complex character group consisting of fallible followers.

⁶⁰ Discussion of the identity of the person who cut off the ear will be reserved for the section concerning the chief priest's servant and the Gethsemane bystander.

⁶¹ Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 415) suggest the main reason for this is to hide the identity of the disciple.

⁶² Heil (*Mark*, 308) notes that this "signals a reversal and renunciation of their discipleship."

narrative plane is commented on after Jesus has died—almost as an afterthought—are shown ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωποῦσαι. Thus, at second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader comes to realize that the Markan Jesus suffers total abandonment in the Passion narrative.

The betrayer

The arrival of Judas signals several layers of irony. Some of the ironies are verbal,⁶³ for example, Judas calling Jesus 'rabbi' and then handing him over to death (Mark 14:45).⁶⁴ The character of Judas is ironically contrasted with that of the unknown woman in Mark 14:3–9. While the latter proclaims Jesus' death in an extravagant demonstration of love, Judas orchestrates Jesus' death through treachery and betrayal for a meagre sum. The intercalation of the anointing into the plot to kill Jesus, creates a powerful effect. The woman is unnamed, and functions as a contrast with Judas, who is named. Lee correctly observes that the Markan community would have realised from the portrayal of Judas (the 'one of the twelve', twice!) that sin and evil are within the church as well as without; and the danger of betrayal is ever present.⁶⁵

At second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader will note the irony of the appellation εἰς τῶν δώδεκα occurring at the Last Supper and arrest (Mark 14:20, 43). Clearly Judas was part of the 'inner circle' of Jesus' disciples—yet becomes the betrayer. The author's use of irony-as-a-form-of-silence here is acute: that Judas is one of the Twelve may be ironic, but no indication is given for his motivation (unlike Matthew and Luke, who apparently felt the need to provide one).⁶⁶ The offer of money from the priests comes *after* Judas goes to them to betray Jesus (Mark 14:11). The use of the paratactic καί to connect with the sentence indicating Judas was seeking the ideal opportunity to hand Jesus over, does not necessarily suggest consequence (as is often indicated in translation); there is no indication at the level of the text to suggest that Judas' action was in response to the offer. Nor is there any explicit indication in Mark of any money being actually given to Judas as payment before or after the betrayal. The hearing-reader realizes

⁶³ See Fowler *Reader*, 159.

⁶⁴ There is also the visual irony of Judas kissing Jesus and then handing him over (Mark 14:45).

⁶⁵ Lee, *Last days*, 108.

⁶⁶ Seeley (*Deconstructing*, 69) notes that "we cannot appeal to any of the various factors that might prompt a disciple to hand over his master; Mark simply does not address the issue."

the irony that Judas is part of the Twelve, but is also perplexed by the author's silence.⁶⁷

Judas is clearly identified with the disciple band that he has abandoned.⁶⁸ He has taken the arresting crowd to a lonely place where Jesus would have few sympathisers; the arrest is made easier in the darkness with Judas' kiss.⁶⁹ This kiss—a false demonstration of affection—is a threshold encounter between Jesus and Judas. The latter is abusing the close bond he had enjoyed as one of the Twelve. Jesus does not respond to his kiss, nor his title of address, which would normally connote respect and honour. Most commentators comment on it as a respectful greeting which therefore heightens the perfidy of Judas' betrayal.⁷⁰ Yet this is certainly not the only possible alternative. It is possible that Judas' kiss as finally performed (rather than planned) may imply repentance on the part of the Markan Judas.

⁶⁷ This silence becomes more perplexing at 14:49 when Jesus speaks of the Scriptures being fulfilled. George Aichele (*Jesus framed*, London: Routledge, 1996, 18) notes the "double ambiguity which concerns both betrayer and betrayed. If God wills Jesus to be betrayed, as is implied in the prayer-scene in Gethsemane, then Judas also does the will of God and deserves no condemnation. However, if Judas betrays Jesus on his own and is therefore worthy of condemnation, then in what sense are scriptures 'fulfilled?'"

⁶⁸ Witherington (*Mark*, 381) notes, however, that each time Judas has been mentioned in the Gospel it is as the one who hands Jesus over.

⁶⁹ Fowler (*Reader*, 157) considers that the ironic kiss and the ironic crown of thorns may have been a Markan invention, or at least "Mark's Gospel is the oldest piece of Christian literature in which both of these superb touches of irony are employed."

⁷⁰ For example, Gundry, (*Mark*, 878) notes the possibility that the kiss was a fabrication to deepen the Betrayer's perfidy. Evans (*Mark*, 423) notes that such a "respectful greeting heighten's Judas' villainy and gives his actions a touch of hypocrisy." See also Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 415); Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 559); Schweizer (*Mark*, 317) who sees it as representing Judas' inner attitude; Witherington (*Mark*, 381) notes that the show of affection makes the betrayal worse; Van Iersel (*Mark*, 437) notes the dramatic irony involved, as the kiss is usually a mark of respect; France (*Mark*, 593) agrees that the kiss was a normal social greeting (cf. also Brown *Death*, 254–255), although Edwards (*Mark*, 438) is unconvinced, and sees the use of a kiss as a sign to be a puzzling choice. Van Iersel (*Mark*, 437) also notes the author's silence about why Judas chooses the kiss as a signal. "Perhaps he thinks that in this way Judas' complicity in the death of Jesus may remain hidden. As the story stands, the eleven other disciples are unaware of what Judas wants to communicate through the kiss." France (*Mark*, 593) also notes the possibility that the kiss was a calculated insult. Broadhead (*Mark*, 115) notes how the kiss is one of several "elements from this scene [that] become poignant symbols—the Twelve, a kiss, the rabbi title, the sword. This curt sequence initiates a stream of violent betrayal, seizure, abandonment." Edwards (*Mark*, 438) notes that the manner of Judas' betrayal is the first of many examples of mockery throughout the passion narrative.

It is interesting to note the difference between the kiss as planned (Mark 14:44) and the intensity of it as expressed (Mark 14:45).⁷¹ In the latter case, the implication is of tenderness, caress, repeated kissing.⁷² At third level dialogue, the reference may reflect dialogical comparison with other texts contemporaneous with it. The incidence of the use of καταφιλέω in the two centuries before and after Mark was written is comparatively frequent in the romance literature.⁷³ In *Ephesiaca*, καταφιλέω is used of the kisses Habrocomes gives Anthia on their wedding night,⁷⁴ and the kisses she repeatedly gives him when they are (sexually) reunited and avowing to each other that they have remained faithful to each other.⁷⁵ In *Callirhoe*, καταφιλέω is used concerning the kiss of the bridegroom Chaereas when he first came to Callirhoe as his bride;⁷⁶ when Dionysius desires Callirhoe and takes advantage of her stumbling towards him to kiss her rather than merely steady her with his hand;⁷⁷ and at a tender moment between Dionysius and Callirhoe, where she blushes and gently kisses him;⁷⁸ in a much later encounter, Callirhoe is delighted with what Chaereas says, and kisses him.⁷⁹ There

⁷¹ In the other Gospels, the kiss or embrace has apparently become a problem. Luke has the kiss refused by Jesus, and does not use καταφιλέω. John just has Judas standing nearby. Matthew includes a tradition in which Judas repents and returns the blood-price to the Jewish leaders, but uses καταφιλέω in the garden scene. Luke uses καταφιλέω at the anointing (Luke 7:38, 45), indicating the continued kissing/embracing of Jesus' feet by the woman. Luke's only other reference is to the kisses/embraces given by the waiting father on the return of the prodigal (Luke 15:20).

⁷² Gundry (*Mark*, 859) suggests that it implies either a "kiss 'down' on a lower part of the body, as on the hand or feet, rather than on the face... Otherwise, κατα- is perfective of prolonged kissing... adding yet another accent on his perfidy..." While Gundry's claim concerning a 'kiss down' is suggestive, there seems little doubt that the important aspect is the intensity (ie prolonged nature) of the kissing. His conclusion that this implies a negative motivation is not the only alternative, however: equally possible is the claim made here that Judas' repentance is evidenced in the kissing, even though Judas ultimately does not cross the threshold created by his coming into the presence of Jesus. Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 559) also notes the added emphasis of καταφιλέω.

⁷³ Of the 205 occurrences of καταφιλέω that occur across 31 different 'books' other than the New Testament through two centuries before and after Mark was written, almost 30% occur in four Greek romances: works by Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius, and Longus. (Search result from CD-ROM *TIG*).

⁷⁴ Εἰπὼν καταφίλει τε καὶ ὑπεδέχετο τὰ δάκρυα (*Ephesiaca* 1.9.3).

⁷⁵ Ταῦτα ἔλεγε καὶ κατεφίλει συνεχῶς (*Ephesiaca* 5.14.4).

⁷⁶ οἱ δὲ γονεῖς τὸν νυμφίον εἰσήγαγον πρὸς τὴν παρθένον. ὁ μὲν οὖν Χαίρεας προσδραμὼν αὐτὴν κατεφίλει (*Callirhoe* 1.1.15).

⁷⁷ ὡς δὴθεν ἀπαξιῶν τὴν χεῖρα δοῦναι, προσαγαγόμενος αὐτὴν κατεφίλησεν (*Callirhoe* 2.7.7).

⁷⁸ ἡ δὲ ἐρυθρίασασα ἡρέμα κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν (*Callirhoe* 3.2.3).

⁷⁹ ἦσθη Καλλιρρόη καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν (*Callirhoe* 8.3.3).

are other instances where the kiss is not sexual in nature, but nevertheless still passionate: Callirhoe kisses the ground at the height of an emotional departure to the other side of the Euphrates;⁸⁰ when Callirhoe has dazzled the crowd so that they wish to pay her homage, she retreats from their sight into a curtained carriage, and thus deprived of seeing her, the people kiss the wagon;⁸¹ the king draws the eunuch to him and embraces him because the eunuch has suggested an approach whereby the king would win Callirhoe;⁸² Callirhoe and Statira are talking, weeping and embracing each other at the time of Callirhoe's departure,⁸³ and the Egyptians are equally intense in their devotion to Chaereas, kissing his head and hands;⁸⁴ Dionysius kisses the letter from Callirhoe, and then kisses her name.⁸⁵ On other occasions, the kiss may be absent but is, in the character's mind, symbolic of intensity of feeling (or its absence): Chaereas is tormented by Callirhoe's dilemma: he expected her to respond passionately to him, but he notes that she saw him but did not come to him and kiss him⁸⁶ and therefore in his distress he kisses the noose which will end his life,⁸⁷ and further recounts the story later to his rescuer Polycharmus.⁸⁸

From these intertextual indicators, it would seem possible that Judas' response may be indicative of a threshold encounter: initially intending to betray Jesus with a kiss, when he encounters Jesus his embrace changes or even intensifies. Drawn to a threshold, Judas nevertheless fails to cross it; instead, despite the warmth of the embrace, his betrayal remains. The Markan Judas then disappears from the narrative plane.⁸⁹ While the Matthean account of Judas (who is also portrayed as kissing Jesus with intensity) includes an account of Judas' repentance and ultimate end, such details are unlikely to have been of interest for Mark (assuming that the Gospel writer was even aware of the traditions concerning Judas' death that Matthew and Luke variously include).

⁸⁰ ταῦτα ἅμα λέγουσα τὴν γῆν κατεφίλησεν, εἶτα ἐπιβᾶσα τῆς πορθμίδος διεπέρασεν. (*Callirhoe* 5.1.7).

⁸¹ οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι, μηκέτι ἔχοντες Καλλιρόην ὁρᾶν, κατεφίλουν τὸν δίφρον. (*Callirhoe* 5.3.10).

⁸² καὶ προσλαβόμενος ὑπὸ χεῖρα τὸν εὐνοῦχον κατεφίλησε (*Callirhoe* 6.4.8).

⁸³ See *Callirhoe* 8.4.10.

⁸⁴ See *Callirhoe* 8.4.11.

⁸⁵ See *Callirhoe* 8.5.13.

⁸⁶ Καλλιρόη με ἰδοῦσα οὐ προσῆλθεν, οὐ κατεφίλησεν (*Callirhoe* 5.10.7).

⁸⁷ See *Callirhoe* 5.10.9.

⁸⁸ See *Callirhoe* 6.2.11.

⁸⁹ Witherington (*Mark*, 381) also notes this disappearance of Judas from the narrative.

The central character in the Passion is the Markan Jesus; all other characters are shown in their abandonment or rejection of Jesus, and it is the contention here that elements of repentance or recognition do not occur in Mark because of the author's concern to emphasise this abandonment and rejection.

Arresting 'crowd'

Traditionally seen as being drawn from among the chief priests, scribes and elders, the arresting 'crowd' could therefore cover the range of Jewish leaders who have plotted Jesus' death. Yet such a traditional understanding is dependent on reading Mark through the 'filter' of Luke 22:52, since there is no indication at the narrative level in Mark (or the other three Gospels) that any of the leaders are explicitly present; the crowd has been sent from the leaders. It is more likely that the arresting 'crowd' consisted mostly of a rabble of vigilante-style persons whose tendency to violence might be being used by the priests to provoke Jesus into the kind of action for which they can charge him with insurrection.⁹⁰ The opportunity for such violence seems to have been missed by them, however, if the individual who cuts off the slave's ear is, in fact, one of the disciples. As there is no explicit indication of association with Jesus—only that it is one of those standing by—it is possible that the perpetrator of the action may have been a member of the arresting 'crowd' who is seeking an opportunity to escalate some violence. If the action of cutting off the ear has second-level dialogical dimensions, however, (and even a hint of carnival), then it is probably

⁹⁰ See also Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 558) who describes the arresting crowd as "a hired rabble"; Van Iersel (*Mark*, 437) refers to them as "a gang of armed men"; Evans (*Mark*, 422) notes the use of thugs by the ruling priests; but contra Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 414), who consider this unlikely given that they are coming from the Jewish leaders who are the "prime movers against Jesus in the Passion narrative." Witherington (*Mark*, 381) follows Painter (*Mark*, 191) in maintaining that the arresting party included the chief priests, scribes and elders. France (*Mark*, 592) sees this as not a 'mob' but an officially sanctioned arresting party. Intriguingly, Edwards (*Mark*, 437) supports the possibility that Roman soldiers are deliberately not mentioned in the Markan arrest, because of a desire to avoid portraying the Romans negatively. Yet the realistic (largely negative) portrayal of the Romans at other points in the passion narrative would suggest that their omission or inclusion would hardly have made much difference to their overall portrayal. Edwards (*Mark*, 437) correctly notes that the members of the arresting crowd are "faceless." It is likely that Mark's use of ὄχλος on this occasion is used of the Temple 'police' and various other persons recruited by the Jewish leadership; but this ὄχλος is not the same as that which Mark uses to portray (in mostly positive terms) the crowd outside Jerusalem and throughout much of the rest of the Gospel.

preferable to see the action as being carried out by someone who perceives themselves to be associated with Jesus.

The role of the arresting ‘crowd’ is clearly to seize Jesus when he is identified by Judas. Having achieved this, they lead him to where the leaders are assembled, and then promptly disappear from the narrative. There is no indication that the members of the arresting ‘crowd’ function as anything but a single entity that creates a background against which the threshold encounter between Jesus and Judas is played out. No threshold encounter seems to have been established between Jesus and the arresting ‘crowd’—despite Jesus’ words at 14:48–49. At best, they hear him speak and then lead him away, but Jesus’ ‘voice’ does not register.

The chief priest’s servant and the Gethsemane bystander

A priest with his ear cut would have been considered unclean (cf. Lev 21:17–23) and therefore unfit to carry out the priestly office.⁹¹ While the slave is not himself carrying out the priestly office, the effect of striking the slave is to strike symbolically at the high priest himself. As there is no explicit mention of the Jewish leaders in the Markan text, the reference to the slave of the high priest effectively places this person as a ‘leader’ of the arresting crowd:⁹² Judas may be betraying Jesus, but his function is identification, whereas the slave is in control of the arrest. The bystander who cut off his ear is identified in John (18:10) as Peter himself. Yet it is inappropriate to read Johannine references back into Mark. The bystander is unnamed, and although not directly identified with the disciples, it is more probable that the bystander is one of the disciple band.⁹³ The bystander acts brashly but probably protectively;

⁹¹ B.T. Viviano (“The High Priest’s servant’s ear: Mark 14:47” *RB* 96, 1989, 71–80) considers that this was not an ordinary servant, but the high priest’s chief assistant. The severed ear lobe amounted to a disfigurement disqualifying him from the priestly office. The intent of the wounding was symbolically to shame the high priest, rather than kill the deputy. Edwards (*Mark*, 439) disagrees with Viviano’s assessment that this is a theological critique of the Temple, since the servant is not, in his view, a deputy. The irony within this incident is that “loss of an ear was the punishment given a robber since Persian times” and therefore the “servant is reduced to the status of a robber”—yet it is Jesus that is arrested as a robber (cf. also Evans, *Mark*, 425).

⁹² Contra Lane (*Mark*, 526) who considers the slave had no official capacity, but was there to provide a report to the high priest of what had occurred.

⁹³ Contra Donahue and Harrington, (*Mark*, 415) who note that *παρεστηκότων* is never used to refer to the disciples, and therefore the blow was probably struck by a member of the arresting ‘crowd’ or some third party. Gundry (*Mark*, 860) agrees, indicating that it was an accidental injury caused by one of the arresting crowd. Brown (*Death*,

the action here may indicate a desire to stand with Jesus—perhaps even to force him to fight. Yet, at another level, the bystander does not cross the threshold any more than any of the other disciples. The inconclusive evidence suggests another example of irony-as-a-form-of-silence: the author does not indicate who struck the blow, and does not include any condemnation of the violence by Jesus.⁹⁴

At second level dialogue is the continued ironic suggestion that those who have come to arrest Jesus are actually unclean—one of them at least, as indicated by his cut ear. There is possibly a carnivalesque element here with the severing of (at least part of) the ear.⁹⁵ Van Iersel notes that “[f]or the reader who visualizes the ear falling to the ground, the incident has a certain undeniable humour.”⁹⁶ The carnivalesque humour relates to the “*debasing* and *bringings-down-to-earth*”⁹⁷ typical of carnival: the slave’s position as the person in charge of the arrest is attacked by the unnamed person, who effectively brings the slave down to earth. Part of the slave is literally brought down to earth, in fact, and appears to remain there. There is no mention of the Markan Jesus healing the ear; to do so would make the slave ‘clean’ again! Instead, the debate about whether Jesus is an unclean ληστής is conducted over the severed ear in the dirt—a symbol of someone else’s identity as a robber! Thus, the hearing-reader hears the ‘voices’ of both the arresting ‘crowd’ and the slave as being unclean.

266–267) suggests that the bystander is not one of the disciples as such, but belonging to some other group expressing animosity against the priests. Edwards (*Mark*, 439) and France (*Mark*, 594) also consider the bystander to not be associated with Jesus and his followers. But given the arresting party has been organized by the priests, this seems unlikely. (See also Gundry, *Mark*, 860). Against Gundry’s conclusion, van Iersel (*Mark*, 438) notes the unlikelihood of a member of the arresting crowd drawing a sword *after* the arrest, and that it would be doubtful that there would have been other individuals there other than the disciple band and the arresting crowd, given the desire for privacy by the Jewish leaders in arresting Jesus. Evans (*Mark*, 424) also opts for the traditional interpretation that it was a disciple.

⁹⁴ Contra Matt 26:52–53, and Luke 22:51. See also Myers (*Binding*, 367) and Witherington (*Mark*, 382).

⁹⁵ The Markan use of the diminutive form ὠτίον has suggested to some (cf. Donahue and Harrington *Mark*, 415) that it was only the earlobe that was cut off.

⁹⁶ Van Iersel, *Mark*, 439. Evans (*Mark*, 424–425) does not consider it to be humorous, however, noting references in Josephus to violent men in the employ of the ruling priests, and suggests that this represents perhaps a “brave attempt to protect Jesus by intercepting a man who was advancing on Jesus to deliver a blow... Peter lands a serious blow to the side of the servant’s head.”

⁹⁷ *PDP*, 139.

The naked young man

The identity and meaning of the young man⁹⁸ is unknown and mysterious.⁹⁹ At first-level dialogue, the young man has clearly abandoned Jesus to his fate, presumably in fear for his own life.¹⁰⁰ The dialogical threshold to which he has been drawn, collapses: although he follows Jesus into danger, when they seize him he flees; he does not cross into true discipleship. Yet, at second-level dialogue, the identity of this young

⁹⁸ Howard M. Jackson ("Why the youth shed his cloak and fled naked: the meaning and purpose of Mark 14:51–52" *JBL* 116/2, 1997, 273–289) notes *inter alia* the recent interest expressed in the so-called *Secret Gospel of Mark*; however, as the matter rests on reconstructions of the Markan redactional history, and this study relates to canonical Mark, no consideration will be given to the relationship to the young man references that occur elsewhere in *Secret Mark* (and the related potentially homosexual initiation that is implied therein). Nor will the discussion concerning *Secret Mark* in recent commentaries (e.g. Evans *Mark*) be canvassed here.

⁹⁹ Donahue and Harrington, (*Mark*, 417) note the different possibilities that have variously been raised, including "one of Jesus' own disciples (John the son of Zebedee, James the Lord's brother, or John Mark, understood to be the evangelist himself), or a curious neighbor aroused from sleep who gets swept up into the confusion... Others take the 'young man' to be an angel... a symbol for Jesus himself, or even a symbol for the Christian undergoing baptismal initiation..." Donahue and Harrington conclude that he stands for those who desert the faith in times of trouble; see also Best's survey of symbolic interpretations (in *Story*, 26–27). Gundry (*Mark*, 861–863), provides an extensive comparison with Jesus, and considers it proleptic of Jesus' resurrection. Waetjen (*Reordering*, 218) sees the young man as "a mirror of Jesus' destiny... [and] the personification of the disciples' vicarious participation in... Jesus' death... that occurs in baptism." Tolbert (*Sowing*, 181, 258, 276) does not clearly distinguish the flight of the young man from that of the disciples. Jackson ("Why the youth" 286) sees the youth as heightening the representation of all who fled. Myers (*Binding*, 369) is another who sees the connection with the burial and resurrection and sees the young man as an allegorical symbol of the disciples who flee in shame before the cross but are later rehabilitated. Lane (*Mark*, 527) infers that the young man is John Mark, as more recently does Witherington (*Mark*, 382). France (*Mark*, 597) sees him as a sympathetic bystander. Evans (*Mark*, 429) has an extensive survey of the possibilities, but concludes with the simpler theory that the young man represents the unprepared disciples, compared with Jesus who is prepared for the dangers ahead. Brown (*Death*, I, 294–304) also dismisses various symbolic interpretations of the young man's identity, including the identification with the young man at Mark 16:5. Brown does note the irony of the young man literally leaving everything not to follow Jesus but to escape arrest, and sees him as a late recruit. Edwards (*Mark*, 440) follows D.E. Nineham (*Saint Mark* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963, 396) in concluding that speculation is profitless; the lack of identification is intentional.

¹⁰⁰ Several scholars (including Heil (*Mark*, 309)) have noted that the manner of the young man's dress clearly indicates he is not armed; thus he also functions as a contrast with the bystander who cuts off the ear of the high-priest's servant. Jackson ("Why the youth" 276–277) notes that he also functions as a contrast with the other disciples, in his "last-ditch effort at closer discipleship to Jesus, and, with that, acceptance of his passion. The youth too, of course, must fail and flee for Jesus to go utterly alone and abandoned to the cross..."

man is also veiled to the hearing-reader—further evidence of opacity in Mark. It is possible that the author is employing irony-as-a-form-of-silence in that the hearing-reader can only speculate on the irony of a young man who follows more closely than the disciples yet in the end is also shamed.

At third-level dialogue, it could be considered that there is an inter-textual reference to Joseph in Gen 39:12–13, although any positive comparison seems unlikely, as Joseph did not flee naked, but his flight retained his integrity.¹⁰¹ No more likely a comparison is any intertextual reference to Amos 2:16: the young man is clearly anything but a courageous warrior.¹⁰² The emphasis on the linen cloth—usually worn by priests—draws an interesting intertextual parallel with Daniel's vision of a heavenly messenger dressed in linen (Daniel 12:6). But this can hardly be sustained this side of the resurrection, when the young man at the tomb is clothed in white robes. At an intra-textual level, the only other occurrence of σινδών is at Mark 15:46, when Jesus' body is wrapped in it.¹⁰³ There is a suggestive comparison between the erstwhile follower who flees naked leaving behind the linen cloth, and the dead Jesus who has stood courageously and whose naked body is wrapped in linen. Therefore, any third-level dialogue probably exists only in an ironic sense in terms of inter-textual references: the young man compares unfavourably in each case.

What if there is some validity to the old claim that the young man is to be identified with the author?¹⁰⁴ However fanciful, many have found it intriguing to consider whether the author has 'painted' himself into this corner of the text in the manner that an

¹⁰¹ Evans (*Mark*, 428) dismisses a Joseph typology, as does Gundry (*Mark*, 881).

¹⁰² J.M. Ross ("The young man who fled naked" *IBS* 13, 1991, 170–174) considers the crucifixion to correspond with Amos' Day of the Lord. Heil (*Mark*, 334) does make a connection at the time of the crucifixion with Amos 8:9 and the Day of the Lord. Most scholars (including Schweizer (*Mark*, 317), Evans (*Mark*, 428), Witherington (*Mark*, 382) Gundry (*Mark*, 881–2) and France (*Mark*, 596)) dismiss this as unlikely because of the dissimilarity between the courageous warrior and the response of the young man and the disciples.

¹⁰³ The only other occurrences in the New Testament are the parallel verses in Matthew 27:59 and Luke 23:53.

¹⁰⁴ Telford (*Mark*, 18–19) has noted and dismissed the claim of the author's artistic signature, noting that the mysterious young man has been attributed to a "literary artifice, the influence of the Old Testament (e.g. Amos 2:16) or bad editing of the underlying source(s)."

artist sometimes depicts himself (usually at the edge of the picture)... [as a] self-portrait. The artist depicts himself as an ordinary person and not as an artist, not as the creator of the picture.¹⁰⁵

Such claims for a Markan self-portrait raise other issues concerning authorship and the ‘eyewitness’ status of the author, however, that could be considered to be naïve historicism. Bakhtin notes that, unlike an artist in a painting

in a self-portrait we *do not see* the author as such (he cannot be seen); in any case we see him no more than in any of the author’s other work. He is revealed most of all in the author’s best pictures. The author-creator cannot be created in that sphere in which he himself appears as the creator.¹⁰⁶

While making no claims for any (unlikely) eyewitness status, it is possible that—at the purely narrative level—the fleeing young man could be the author’s ‘voice’ becoming embedded in the text; here the author is no different from the other disciples in fleeing, and thus the hearing-reader becomes aware that it is not possible *before the end of the Gospel* for anyone to assume the role of ideal disciple: even the author would have fled. If the young man is the author (or even the hearing-reader) as an ‘ideal’ disciple, even this ‘ideal’ disciple finally panics and flees. His departure reinforces the totality of the desertion of Jesus by his disciples.¹⁰⁷ He will reappear as (or be replaced by) the young man gloriously dressed in the empty tomb. Thus the author’s ‘voice’ will resurface at Mark 16, where it again takes the form of the ‘young man’ and invites the disciples (including the hearing-reader) to return to Galilee—that is, to the beginning.

There is carnivalesque humour here, as well.¹⁰⁸ Apart from the ‘slum naturalism’ of a comic brawl and ‘exposé’ typical of the carnivalesque,

¹⁰⁵ *N70*, 149.

¹⁰⁶ *MHS*, 161.

¹⁰⁷ Heil (*Mark*, 309) notes that the young man’s abandonment of Jesus intensively reinforces that of all the disciples and definitively illustrates the radical failure and impossibility for anyone at all to ‘follow with’ Jesus at this most critical time on his way to suffering and death.

¹⁰⁸ The humour is not lost on van Iersel (*Mark*, 441) who notes that “this episode also makes a comical impression on... [the] reader, who imagines that the accomplices of the Temple authorities already feel slighted by the ironic remarks of Jesus, [and] is amused to see them standing there holding only a linen cloth in their hands while the boy makes his escape. All the more so because someone reading the story for the second time catches here a glimpse of the white robe that the narrator, at the end of the book, puts on another young man, who announces that Jesus has risen.”

this scene is also the first of a series of scandal-scenes characteristic of carnival. Bakhtin describes such scenes as involving "all sorts of violations of the generally accepted and customary course of events and the established norms of behaviour and etiquette."¹⁰⁹ Nakedness only heightens the scandal that the Markan Jesus should be arrested covertly by such an armed crowd, and that the subsequent trial should violate accepted norms of behaviour. Concern has been expressed by scholars about the historical accuracy of aspects of the trial *because* of the variation from normal practice,¹¹⁰ but the influence of carnival categories makes such aberrations part of the scandal-catastrophe of the passion. Thus, at this point, the comedy of the naked disciple in flight is drawn as a carnival opposite¹¹¹ to the seriousness of Jesus' arrest. The young man is stripped naked just as Jesus will be stripped naked; but the former shames himself, whereas others will seek to shame Jesus. The former flees, whereas Jesus will go the way of the cross. The young man at Mark 14:52 joins the disciples in abandoning Jesus; the young man at Mark 16:5 will point the disciples back to Jesus.

High priest

While other gospel traditions mention the high priest as Caiaphas, the high priest in Mark is anonymous. The absence of such a reference is suggestive: exclusion of non-essential detail gives the narrative a sense of urgency reflective of the urgency with which the Jewish leaders would have meant to dispose of the problem of the Nazarene.¹¹² Frustrated by the inability of the false witnesses to coordinate and corroborate their testimony, the high priest interrogates Jesus, initially challenging his silence and then confronting him concerning his identity. The legality of this approach has been questioned since it effectively invites Jesus to condemn himself solely on his own testimony!¹¹³ At

¹⁰⁹ *PDP*, 117.

¹¹⁰ See discussion to follow under 'Jewish leaders.'

¹¹¹ Bakhtin notes "the structural characteristics of the carnival image: it strives to encompass and unite within itself both poles of becoming or both members of an antithesis: ... affirmation-repudiation, tragic-comic, and so forth, while the upper pole of a two-in-one image is reflected in the lower ... [Thus] opposites come together, look at one another, are reflected in one another, know and understand one another." (*PDP*, 176.)

¹¹² Van Iersel (*Mark*, 444) considers the absence of names for Jesus' adversaries (apart from Herod and Pilate) as understandable because the trajectory of the plot-line associated with them is less significant than that associated with the disciple band.

¹¹³ Heil (*Mark*, 314) sees the high priest's question as "the climactic question which echoes the superscription of the entire narrative [that is, from] (1:1), 'Are you the Christ,

second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader notices the irony of a full christological statement on the lips of the high priest.¹¹⁴ At third-level dialogue, however, the question functions intra-textually to provide the terminus of the secrecy motif: Jesus, whose identity has been affirmed to the hearing-reader from Mark 1:1, and re-affirmed several times, including on the lips of Peter (Mark 8:29), is now called upon to finally ‘unmask’ himself. He does so, with the unambiguous use of Ἐγώ εἰμι (Mark 14:62)—the only occurrence in Mark other than the reference to false claims in Jesus’ name (Mark 13:6), and the mysterious usage at Mark 6:50!

The high priest’s response to Jesus’ claims is to tear his garments¹¹⁵ and announce that no further witnesses are needed.¹¹⁶ There is a possible third-level dialogue with the action of the leaders of the Assyrian army on hearing that Judith had killed Holofernes (Judith 14:19);¹¹⁷ with Hezekiah’s action on hearing of Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah (2 Kings 18:37–19:1);¹¹⁸ and with David’s action on hearing of the deaths of Saul and Benjamin (2 Sam 1:11);¹¹⁹ each of which indicate profound grief as a response. Jesus’ statement has been so offensive that such a dramatic action is, from the high-priest’s perspective, the only appropriate response—although the grief appears insincere to the hearing-reader. The carnivalesque element evident here is that, as Jesus removes the clothing of the carnival clown, the high-priest tears his clothes in what for the hearing-reader is a symbolic inversion. At the point when the carnival clown removes his disguise, the high priest’s action indicates his refusal to recognise him—an irony that would not be lost on the hearing-reader. The high-priest announces Jesus’ blas-

the Son of the Blessed One?” ” Myers (*Binding*, 376–377) also notes this irony. Seeley (*Deconstructing*, 70) considers the high priest’s question as a last resort since none of the prepared charges was working.

¹¹⁴ See also Edwards (*Mark*, 446).

¹¹⁵ France (*Mark*, 614) (contra Gundry (*Mark*, 887)) believes this does not necessarily suggest “tearing down to the bare skin.” Hooker (*Mark*, 357) believes it is proleptic of the tearing of the Temple curtain; from this point, the destiny of both Jesus and the Temple is determined.

¹¹⁶ Heil (*Mark*, 315) notes the irony evident that this comment “points to the need for Jesus’ followers to confirm his testimony by giving witness to their faith in Jesus and his gospel.”

¹¹⁷ See also Heil (*Mark*, 315).

¹¹⁸ See also Heil (*Mark*, 315), and Edwards (*Mark*, 448).

¹¹⁹ See also Edwards (*Mark*, 448).

phemy,¹²⁰ yet the hearing-reader will note the multiple dramatic ironies in such a comment: what could be more blasphemous than to sentence the Son of the Blessed One to death?¹²¹ By condemning Jesus to death, they are releasing him to exercise the divine power to build the new sanctuary not made with hands.¹²²

Jewish leaders (chief priest, elders and scribes)

The Jewish leaders are frustrated by their inability to marshal sufficient evidence against Jesus for a summary sentence of death.¹²³ The irony behind their condemnation of Jesus to death arises from what the hearing-reader realizes: "they are actually fulfilling God's plan precisely as predicted by Jesus [at Mark 8:31, 9:31 & 10:33]".¹²⁴ Some then spat on Jesus, covered his face and struck him, mocking him and challenging him to 'prophecy'.¹²⁵ There is a savage irony here. Jesus has prophesied concerning his power to build a sanctuary not made with hands, and has prophesied concerning his vindication; and also concerning Peter's denial, which happens concurrently in the courtyard nearby. By now covering his face and mockingly asking him to prophesy, they fail to realise that they are the ones whose faces are blinded, and they have already received more prophecy than they can cope with. "Jesus' past prophecies are being fulfilled precisely through the derisive mockery of his power to prophesy..."¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Edwards (*Mark*, 449) follows Juél (*Mark*, 51) and Cranfield (*Mark*, 441) in noting that the claim to be Messiah was apparently not blasphemous in Jesus' day. See also Bock's extensive discussion of the nature of blasphemy.

¹²¹ See Hooker (*Mark*, 560); also Witherington (*Mark*, 384) who notes the irony that the high priest is cautious about using the divine name, yet "careless about God's honor and justice in the way he adjudicates these proceedings."

¹²² Heil (*Mark*, 316) notes this second irony.

¹²³ Opinion varies concerning whether this council convened at this time of night was, in fact, the Sanhedrin. Heil (*Mark*, 311–312) and Gundry (*Mark*, 896–97) certainly think so, with Gundry arguing for a full attendance of the Sanhedrin (contra France (*Mark*, 603)). Edwards (*Mark*, 442–444) considers the problematic nature of the trial proceedings, citing references from the Mishnah. He concludes, however, that it was probably a preliminary hearing rather than a formal sitting of the Sanhedrin. (See also Cranfield (*Mark*, 441). France (*Mark*, 602) argues against it being a trial at all; rather a search for a suitable charge on which Jesus could be brought before Pilate. The important issue would seem to be that Mark insists that the whole Sanhedrin were present—whether it was a formal trial or not.

¹²⁴ Heil, (*Mark*, 316). See also Edwards (*Mark*, 446–448).

¹²⁵ Witherington (*Mark*, 385) claims that the reactions of the Jewish leaders "are in fact ritualistic, meant to show disgust and abhorrence for what they had heard."

¹²⁶ See Heil, (*Mark*, 317), France (*Mark*, 617).

By morning, the Jewish leaders continued their council together; having condemned Jesus, they now determine the arrangements for his execution, including the process of handing him over to Pilate.¹²⁷ Ironically, having so recently taunted Jesus to prophesy, they now unwittingly fulfil an earlier prophecy (Mark 10:33) that they would hand him over to the Gentiles.

During the trial before Pilate, the Jewish leaders (and especially the chief priests) manage to incite the crowd—an irony that would not be lost on the hearing-reader who recalls the concern of the same leaders (at Mark 14:2) to avoid a riot.¹²⁸ Their persuasion of the crowd is instrumental in forcing Pilate's hand so that he hands Jesus over.

At the scene of the cross, the Jewish leaders will intensify the mockery by the crowd/passersby of Jesus. Edwards notes the implication that “the derision hurled at Jesus is blasphemy against God—making the chief priests and scribes guilty of the very thing Jesus was condemned for by the Sanhedrin.”¹²⁹ Their ironic reference to Jesus saving himself would not, at first-level dialogue, have any deeper meaning than referring to the physical healings that Jesus has effected. At second-level dialogue, the irony assumes more theological overtones: it is precisely by not saving himself that he can save others (Mark 10:45). The Jewish leaders also transform the Gentile expression Ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων into the more Jewish Ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραήλ—perhaps in an attempt to make their mockery more ‘personal.’¹³⁰

Peter

Peter serves as a foil for Jesus, in the contrast between the ‘trial of Peter’ occurring outside in the courtyard, and the ‘trial of Jesus’ occurring inside the high priest’s house.¹³¹ At third-level dialogue, Peter’s action

¹²⁷ So, too, Heil (*Mark*, 321). Witherington (*Mark*, 388) considers the morning meeting was official, whereas it was an unofficial meeting during the night. See also Hurtado (*Mark*, 245), and Myers (*Binding*, 372). Lane (*Mark*, 545) suggests this is the final phase of the night meeting when they make their decision; Witherington (*Mark*, 389) concedes the likelihood of this theory. Edwards (*Mark*, 457) too, supports the concept of reaching a decision at this time.

¹²⁸ See Heil (*Mark*, 325).

¹²⁹ Edwards (*Mark*, 473).

¹³⁰ France (*Mark*, 648) notes helpfully that the term “has a more patriotic, even theological, tone which makes its use in mockery by the leaders of Israel particularly poignant.”

¹³¹ Evans (*Mark*, 440) notes Schneider’s claim (in *NowT* 12 (1970) 22–39) that this is a Markan ‘diptych’ which contrasts “the confessing Jesus inside and the denying Peter

in following at a distance may be an intertextual reference to Psalm 38:12.¹³² There is an ironic contrast now between Peter and Jesus: Peter is no longer with (μετά) Jesus (cf Mark 3:14), but instead sits with the guards μετά τῶν ὑπηρετῶν (Mark 14:54). He warms himself before the fire πρὸς τὸ φῶς (14:54), while Jesus stands before the high priest πρὸς τὸν ἀρχιερέα (Mark 14:53).¹³³ Jesus makes a courageous confession of his identity when confronted by the high-priest (the highest ranking Jewish male) with the question of his identity as the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One (Mark 14:61); while Peter is questioned by a maid (a woman with little if any authority) about his connection with 'the Nazarene.'¹³⁴

The irony for the hearing-reader is that Peter's claim of neither knowing nor understanding what she is talking about, is all too accurate: Peter neither knows nor understands the nature of discipleship.¹³⁵ Despite his (partial) penetration of Jesus' identity at Mark 8:29, the increasing vehemence of Peter's denials reinforces the irony of what he says: Peter not only does not understand the nature of discipleship, he really does

outside, both of whom are accused in a series of three." Evans also differs with commentators who see the trial scene as intercalated into the denials; referring to the similar Johannine pattern, and arguing from the unlikelihood of traditions of Peter's denial separately circulating without the trial scene, Evans therefore argues against intercalation theories. Even if Evans is correct in assuming pre-Markan tradition shaping the narrative in its current form, the juxtaposition of the two creates dramatic irony at the level of the text. Auerbach correctly notes the difficulties of finding generic parallels for Peter's denial scene. "It is too serious for comedy, too contemporary and everyday for tragedy, politically too insignificant for history—and the form which was given it is one of such immediacy that its like does not exist in the literature of antiquity." (*Mimesis*, 45). Auerbach spends significant time making comparisons between Trimalchio's banquet (in *Petronii Satiricon*) and Peter's denial scene, although to do so he tends to make assumptions concerning Peter's inner thoughts that are less evident from the narrative of Mark. Perhaps a more fruitful point of comparison (between *Petronii Satiricon* and Mark's Gospel) would have been the tale of the Widow of Ephesus and aspects of Mark's crucifixion scene.

¹³² "My friends and companions stand aloof ... and my kinsmen stand afar off" (Thus, for example, Heil, *Mark*, 311.)

¹³³ See Heil, *Mark*, 311.

¹³⁴ Heil, (*Mark*, 318), notes the ironic contrast.

¹³⁵ Lane (*Mark*, 543) indicates that Peter may be employing a technical form of issuing a legal denial. Witherington (*Mark*, 386) concurs with this assessment, but Edwards (*Mark*, 450) believes that the two Greek verbs denote theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge, hence the use of both terms. This explanation appears a little forced, and it is probably simpler to note the ironic effect that the choice of words occasions, especially in the contrast (as Edwards (*Mark*, 451) notes) between Peter's swearing against Jesus' identity, and Jesus 'oath' affirming his identity as God's Son.

not know Jesus.¹³⁶ Peter ‘the Rock’ denies Jesus (Mark 14:71). At the second cock-crow, Peter recalls Jesus’ prophecy, and breaks down. It is interesting to note that the Markan Peter weeps, but perhaps not with the intensity of the Matthean Peter, who weeps bitterly (πικρῶς).¹³⁷

Guards/attendants

The guards are mentioned only twice, at Mark 14:54, and Mark 14:65, yet they serve as a foil for Peter. Initially, Peter warms himself with the guards in the courtyard. Later, the guards administer their own special treatment of Jesus: καὶ οἱ ὑπηρέται ῥαπίσμασιν αὐτὸν ἔλαβον. The nature of this treatment is speculative:¹³⁸ certainly it is abusive and vulgar. Peter has associated himself with those who will range themselves against Jesus; and the treatment he receives from them (enquiry concerning his association with Jesus) is met with loud and vehement denial. By contrast the treatment they will give to Jesus is received with silent acceptance.

False witnesses

The irony of the false testimony of the false witnesses consists in the fact of their false report of the allegedly hyperbolic claim by Jesus that he would destroy the ναός and within three days he would build a new Temple—one not made by hands (Mark 14:56–8).¹³⁹ While a false accusation, the hearing-reader will note that it proves a true prediction of the power that will be exercised in Jesus’ death and resurrection. The false testimony—although a true prophecy—is insufficient to convict Jesus, since the witnesses could not agree.

¹³⁶ Heil (*Mark*, 319–320) notes how this functions as ironic understatement for the hearing-reader. Witherington (*Mark*, 387) also notes the irony; but Schweizer (*Mark*, 332) points to the inappropriateness of this context for a confession of faith.

¹³⁷ Cranfield (*Mark*, 448) and France correctly note (*Mark*, 623) that the Markan choice of ἐπιβαλόν may be obscure, but indicate that at the very least Peter does show remorse.

¹³⁸ Cranfield (*Mark*, 446) indicates that the action here appears to be a vulgarism.

¹³⁹ Witherington (*Mark*, 384) follows Hooker (*Mark*, 358) in pointing out the significance of claiming to destroy the Holy of Holies—leading to an even graver charge, had it been successful testimony. Heil (*Mark*, 312–313) notes that false witnesses “are unwittingly and ironically proclaiming on a deeper level a true prophecy about Jesus for the reader... that it is precisely through the death of Jesus, the aim of this ‘false’ accusation, that he will exercise the divine power of his resurrection to establish a new, superior ‘sanctuary,’... the community that performs authentic worship...”

Maid and courtyard bystanders

The maid (παίδισκη) of the high-priest may have been a servant, and certainly her presence in the courtyard indicates that she was not high-born.¹⁴⁰ She stands in contrast to her master: her 'accusation' of association with Jesus does not appear to have the sinister undertone of the high-priest's accusations of Jesus. Nevertheless, her comments draw Peter to the threshold where he must determine his response not only to the maid but, by implication, to Jesus himself. The maid identifies Peter as having been in the company of Jesus. There is an interesting narrative gap here, and the hearing-reader can only conjecture at the circumstances in which the maid had seen Peter with Jesus. It seems unlikely that she would have been part of the arresting crowd, and therefore the hearing-reader can only conclude that her knowledge must have come from some other encounter.¹⁴¹ Does such an encounter indicate sympathy or antipathy on the maid's behalf? There are no clues in the narrative concerning her motivation, and this only heightens the narrative tension occasioned by Peter's response.

The maid later encounters Peter again—after he had withdrawn to the (comparative) safety of the forecourt. The intensification of the maid's accusation at Mark 14:69 becomes another example of ironic understatement since Peter is not merely one of the disciples, he has been the *leading* one of the band.¹⁴² This time, her comments are addressed to the bystanders: ἤρξατο πάλιν λέγειν (Mark 14:69). The Markan construction using the redundant middle aorist of ἄρχω is curious: a simple imperfect could have sufficed, unless there was an underlying reason. Could it indicate something of the rapid nature of Peter's denial (Mark 14:70)—that the maid had *barely begun* to comment

¹⁴⁰ Mary Ann Tolbert ("Mark," in Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe (eds.) *Women's Bible Commentary*, Louisville, Ky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, 273) notes that her "presence in the courtyard among groups of bystanders suggests her lowly status, for no woman or girl of honorable rank would be permitted access to such places. She speaks to Peter in public...another clear sign of her "shamed" or lowly status." France (*Mark*, 620) notes the use of the diminutive feminine form to emphasize her social insignificance. Witherington (*Mark*, 383) sees her as the female doorkeeper!

¹⁴¹ Tolbert (*Women's Bible Commentary*, 273) notes the "question-and-answer format was a very common feature of recognition scenes in Greek literature from Homer on and would have been expected and understood by an ancient audience."

¹⁴² See also Heil (*Mark*, 319) who notes that Peter was the "preeminent leader...and spokesman of the disciples..., the one who vehemently protested that he would be the exception to all others by dying with Jesus rather than denying him..."

before Peter's 'voice' in vehement denial prevents her 'voice' from further 'accusation'?

By the third accusation, the maid has 'added' the bystanders to confront Peter about his discipleship; including the reference to him being a Galilean. This again reflects ironic understatement, as it reconnects the discipleship motif with Galilee—and ultimately with the call to return to discipleship.¹⁴³ The effect of this increased 'chorus' of accusation forces Peter to panic and he begins to curse and swear. At second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader notes that the maid serves as a counter-foil for the high-priest, and the ironic contrast between the two characters heightens the corresponding contrast between Jesus and Peter.¹⁴⁴ The courtyard bystanders serve as a counterfoil to the false witnesses inside: unlike the false witnesses who are unable to reach 'agreement,' the bystanders chorus their witness against Peter, who unlike Jesus, does not remain silent before their accusation.

Pilate

Pilate's presence in the Markan narrative is comparatively brief for a named character: he is needed to pronounce the Roman sentence, and to hand over the body of Jesus later, but the portrayal of his character is briefest in Mark of all the Gospels. The close parallels with the questioning by the high-priest (Mark 14:60–62) and that of Pilate (the exact parallel sequence would be 15:4–5, 15:2) functions at two levels: at first-level dialogue, almost identical 'thresholds' are established between Jesus and the two men questioning him.¹⁴⁵ In neither case will the character cross the threshold. At second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader realizes that the 'voices' of both Jewish and Gentile leaderships will reject Jesus' 'voice,' and treat Jesus in a similar manner.

Pilate's question is a re-formed version of the Jewish blasphemy allegation, transmuted into a charge that will immediately concern Pilate: a claim to kingship, as a potential 'rival' for Roman rule. Yet his question of Jesus is heavily ironic: at first-level dialogue, Pilate is mocking, and incredulous that the person before him could be facing

¹⁴³ See Heil (*Mark*, 319).

¹⁴⁴ This contrast in social standing has been commented upon by Heil (*Mark*, 318), who notes that "[e]ncountering Peter as having been "with" (*meta*) Jesus, the maid underlines for the reader Peter's abandonment of his special privilege as one of the Twelve to be "with" (*meta*) Jesus (3.14)(14:67)."

¹⁴⁵ Witherington (*Mark*, 388) following Myers (*Binding*, 370) notes the joint rejection by Jewish and Gentile authorities.

such a charge. But at second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader is made aware of the dramatic irony involved with Pilate becoming the second person on whose lips appears a christological statement concerning Jesus' identity!¹⁴⁶ The response Pilate receives is, at best, non-committal,¹⁴⁷ causing him to wonder.¹⁴⁸ Alone of the Gospel writers, Mark records that Pilate recognises the element of envy in the actions of the Jewish leaders.¹⁴⁹ His actions, at the level of the narrative, begin to move toward acquittal as he hesitates: he invokes his 'custom' to release a prisoner at the feast, so that he can encourage the release of Jesus.¹⁵⁰ This backfires on him, and he asks the crowd to determine the fate of Jesus—an interesting irony, since it seems unlikely that he would have considered releasing both prisoners!¹⁵¹

At the level of the carnivalesque, the Markan Pilate may be engaging in a carnival verbal agon when he engages with the chief priests concerning what he should do with Jesus (Mark 15:11–14). Bakhtin notes characteristics of the carnivalesque including

...carnivalistic shifts of clothing and of positions and destinies in life; ... carnival mystifications, bloodless carnival wars, verbal agon and cursing matches, exchanges of gifts...¹⁵²

Both the exchanges between Pilate and the Jewish leaders, and also the tradition of releasing a prisoner, appear to suggest carnival elements: the characters are consciously playing to others during a festival, invoking elements of carnival of which other characters, or members of

¹⁴⁶ Edwards (*Mark*, 458) notes this irony.

¹⁴⁷ See also Hooker (*Mark*, 367), Edwards (*Mark*, 459).

¹⁴⁸ Witherington (*Mark*, 391) notes Pilate's surprise, and suggests "this perhaps tips him off that something suspicious is going on."

¹⁴⁹ Although Brown (*Death*, 802–803) sees this as a more positive 'jealous zeal' for the law. But such a positive assessment seems unlikely, given Mark's desire to implicate the Jewish leaders.

¹⁵⁰ Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 580) notes that the evidence for this 'custom' is largely limited to the Gospels, although he notes some analogous practice by others. Edwards (*Mark*, 460) and France (*Mark*, 629) also note that it is exclusive to the Gospels. Schweizer (*Mark*, 337) notes that Pilate's question to the crowd suggests that the people have not yet asked for anyone specifically.

¹⁵¹ Contra Cranfield (*Mark*, 451). France (*Mark*, 632) maintains that Pilate misjudged Jesus' level of popularity; he would have had little popular support among the Jerusalem crowd compared with support for Barabbas. But in light of the entry into Jerusalem, France's conclusion seems hard to sustain.

¹⁵² *PDP*, 125. Bakhtin further explains that an agon "is that part of a Greek drama in which two protagonists, each aided by half of the chorus, engage in verbal conflict." *PDP*, 125.

the crowd, may be aware. If Pilate's custom is considered as part of his understanding of carnival (which, as a Roman, would have been expected),¹⁵³ then it is possible that Pilate's release of a prisoner *at the feast* was not a matter of pardoning a prisoner—a possibility that seems unlikely given the sadistic nature of Pilate's character as revealed in Mark and especially in Josephus, and also given the nature of Barabbas' crime as recorded in Mark. Rather the custom may have consisted in releasing the captive *to the crowd*.¹⁵⁴ The likely outcome of such a release would have been carnival abuse of the prisoner, and possible death as a result.¹⁵⁵ If the prisoner survived, there was always the likelihood of being taken back into Roman custody. Pilate may have been prepared to risk the release even of a popular prisoner, and of 'losing' that prisoner if such popularity spared them from carnival abuse. Certainly, this is conjectural, but it would explain the absence of any historical evidence outside the Gospels of Pilate pardoning a prisoner, and clear expectation by the crowd of this (carnival) touch at the time of the feast! It would also help to explain Pilate's suggestion that he release Jesus (to the crowd), ἐγίνωσκεν γὰρ ὅτι διὰ φθόνον παραδεδώκεισαν αὐτὸν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς (Mark 15:10). There had been no indication *to Pilate*, nor any offer on his part, of the crowd being incited to ask for Barabbas as a possible alternative. The Jewish leaders, however, cannot afford the possibility that Jesus' release *to the crowd* might result in his popularity overcoming carnival abuse, and that he might therefore 'slip through their net.' Therefore they seek to avoid the risk by ensuring that Jesus is retained in Roman custody; even Barabbas is a more palatable alternative.

¹⁵³ Bakhtin (*PDP*, 126) relates the Roman carnival ritual of 'moccoli' noting that "each participant in the carnival carried a lighted candle ('a candle stub'), and each tried to put out another's candle with the cry 'Sia ammazzato!' ('Death to thee!')." Such apparently childish rituals translate to a potentially more sadistic form when adults—especially those like Pilate—engage in carnival! Even the cry of 'Crucify him' could be a carnival shout with strong echoes of 'Death to thee!'

¹⁵⁴ To some extent, such an understanding hinges upon the interpretation of ἀπολύω. That it is always followed by a dative, rather than standing on its own as a release of a prisoner, suggests that αὐτοῖς (15:6) and ὑμῖν (15:9) could be translated 'to them' as an alternative to 'for them.'

¹⁵⁵ Bakhtin speaks of "a typical carnivalistic 'sacrificial' dismemberment into parts." (*PDP*, 162).

That Pilate eventually fails in his attempted appeals to achieve his purposes¹⁵⁶—whatever they may have been—reveals the extent to which, in Mark at least, Pilate is a weak man, although no less culpable.¹⁵⁷ At third-level dialogue, Pilate's reluctance to convict Jesus has co-textual echoes of Herod's reluctance to have John killed (Mark 6:26), not least because both have placed themselves at the mercy of others—the dinner-guests (and Herodias' 'hijacking' of the birthday feast) in Herod's case, and the crowd and his custom (as 'hijacked' by the Jewish leaders) in Pilate's.¹⁵⁸ Knowing that Jesus is probably innocent, he not only authorizes his execution, but prescribes a whipping too.¹⁵⁹ Later, after Jesus has died, Pilate is approached by Joseph of Arimathea to obtain the body, and expresses surprise at how quickly Jesus has died.

Crowd/passersby

The crowd suddenly appears for the first time to ask Pilate for his usual custom of releasing a prisoner at the Feast (15:8).¹⁶⁰ It is ultimately the crowd who form the principal reason why Pilate finally decides to crucify Jesus: at first level dialogue, the crowd is confronted with a choice between the (vocal) Jewish leaders and (silent) Jesus, and the failure to cross the threshold into faith is apparent in the narrative.¹⁶¹ Although

¹⁵⁶ Witherington (*Mark*, 390) sees Pilate's desire to release Jesus not as a result of fair-mindedness, but rather a desire to spite the Jewish leaders. By contrast, Edwards (*Mark*, 463) considers it unlikely that Pilate was appealing for Jesus' release to intentionally aggravate the Jews.

¹⁵⁷ Edwards (*Mark*, 463) notes: "The chief priests instigated the plot against Jesus, but the Roman prefect bears responsibility for executing it."

¹⁵⁸ A point that Focant's article ("La tête" 348–349) makes in drawing the comparisons between the two: "Comme Hérode s'était senti lié par les convives-témoins (6.26), Pilate est prisonnier de la foule et de la coutume (15.15). Le sens de la faveur consentie par le détenteur de l'autorité à l'occasion d'une fête (anniversaire ou fête de la Pâque) est détourné dans le premier cas par Hérodiade, dans le second par les grands prêtres." (So, similarly R.M. Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes: the Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark* SBLDS 54, Chico, Ca: Scholars Press, 1981, 121).

¹⁵⁹ France (*Mark*, 643) comments that flogging was the customary prelude to crucifixion. Witherington (*Mark*, 392) notes the inherent barbarism of Pilate's authorized flogging; Heil (*Mark*, 326) notes the fulfillment effect of the passion prediction at 10:33–34 by an unwitting Pilate.

¹⁶⁰ Cranfield (*Mark*, 450) indicates the likelihood that the crowd were supporters of Barabbas. France (*Mark*, 631) considers it unlikely that this crowd contained people who witnessed Jesus' entry to Jerusalem; he considers it was pilgrims from Galilee who greeted Jesus at his entry, but a Jerusalem crowd who wanted him crucified.

¹⁶¹ Seeley (*Deconstructing*, 69) asks: "If the crowds bend so easily to every priestly influence, then why were the priests ever worried? ... This scene makes nonsense of all that Mark has said about why the priests want Jesus dead. ... The crowds adored Jesus, and

Jesus is clearly innocent, the crowd's insistence contributes to the irony that, despite demanding the death of the 'king,' they help to fulfil the divine plan for Jesus to be established as their true king.¹⁶²

At the cross, the crowd/passersby engage in ironic mockery of Jesus' powerlessness.¹⁶³ At second-level dialogue, however, the hearing-reader becomes aware of the irony that only if Jesus does *not* come down from the cross, will he be able to save his life—and that of others. The 'misunderstanding' on the part of the crowd/passersby concerning Jesus' 'cry of dereliction' may not be so much a mishearing as an obtuse twisting of Jesus' words.¹⁶⁴ That the words were said in the context of a loud cry suggests—at the level of the narrative—that they could be heard plainly. If, at first-level dialogue, this is a deliberate distortion by some of the bystanders, then clearly the threshold established with Jesus' words has not been crossed—indeed has been actively refused—by those responding in this way. Thus, by choosing to interpret Jesus' words as a cry for Elijah to help him, they are able to continue the motif of their mockery: since he has obviously realized he cannot rescue himself, perhaps he had better call Elijah to rescue him.¹⁶⁵ At second-level dialogue, the hearing-reader will hear the 'voice' of the righteous suffering one, who calls out to God in the words of the Psalmist. The hearing-reader will also notice the irony that not even Elijah can rescue Jesus: in fact, 'Elijah' (= the Baptizer) has already come and suffered a similar fate as described in Mark 6:27–29.

Barabbas

The use of the clause οὔτινες ἐν τῇ στάσει φόνον πεποιήκεισαν (15:7) seems to allude to an 'erased' narrative about Zealotic insurgency

now they deliver him up to death. The reason is not to be found in human nature, but in Mark's need to show Jesus, however implausibly, betrayed by those who should most assiduously care for and protect him. Apparently, Mark is concerned more for carrying out this motif than for a self-consistent narrative."

¹⁶² So Heil (*Mark*, 325).

¹⁶³ Kingsbury (*Christology*, 128) notes that, from Mark's perspective, the content of mockery from both Jews and Gentiles is actually true. France (*Mark*, 647) considers their tone that of "vindictive sarcasm." Fowler (*Reader*, 11) notes the two levels of irony here: the mocking irony of their words, and irony that their words are, in fact, true.

¹⁶⁴ Mark F. Whitters ("Why did the bystanders think Jesus called upon Elijah before he died (Mark 15:34–36)? The Markan position" in *HTR* 95:1, 2002, 119–24) argues that the bystanders' response is indicative of Markan rejection of "an alternate view about Jesus, one that identified him as Elijah...[and] was yet another ironic misunderstanding."

¹⁶⁵ Edwards (*Mark*, 477) appears to miss the irony of the bystanders' words, indicating that they invoke Elijah on Jesus' behalf.

against Rome.¹⁶⁶ The hearing-reader would note the irony that while Barabbas was an appropriate candidate for execution, Jesus clearly was not.¹⁶⁷ The use of the plural 'who' suggests that Barabbas may not himself have been a murderer.¹⁶⁸ That his name appears to mean 'son of the father' provides the opportunity for a carnivalesque reversal: the Jewish leaders will request Barabbas 'son of the father' rather than Jesus 'Son of the Father.' The hearing-reader is also called to make the choice between the two:¹⁶⁹ one representing the way of political might, and the other, the way of suffering discipleship. If the possibility exists that Pilate is forced to release Barabbas *to the crowd* as a carnival fool to attract abuse, there is no indication on the narrative plane that the carnival exchange ever actually occurs! Barabbas disappears as quickly as he appears.

Soldiers

The whole cohort gathers for 'sport' at Jesus' expense.¹⁷⁰ Here, ὅλην in relation to the whole cohort of soldiers (15:16) is a counterpoint to the πάντες of the Sanhedrin (14:53).¹⁷¹ The actions of the soldiers in mocking Jesus are ironic at two levels: firstly at the level of the soldiers themselves, who engage in carnival mockery with various substitutes for regal attire and treatment: purple robe, crown of thorns, reed, kneeling in mock homage.¹⁷² The soldiers would probably have been

¹⁶⁶ See Belo (*Lecture matérialiste*, 224) for discussion. But Belo's conclusion raises more questions than it answers. If this was an insurrection that benefited opportunistically from Jesus' messianic action, why is Pilate apparently convinced of Jesus' innocence? And why do the Jewish leaders not simply connect Jesus to the insurrection in their accusations before Pilate?

¹⁶⁷ Witherington (*Mark*, 391) notes this irony, commenting that Jesus "is going to be killed for the sort of crime that the man set free actually committed." See also Heil (*Mark*, 324).

¹⁶⁸ But see Gundry (*Mark*, 926), who sees the implied association. Evans (*Mark*, 481) notes the ambivalence in the text.

¹⁶⁹ So also Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 439).

¹⁷⁰ The term σπεῖρα can refer to a cohort of 600 soldiers, or the smaller manipule of 200. It seems unlikely that Mark is requiring a specific number.

¹⁷¹ See Heil (*Mark*, 327).

¹⁷² Witherington (*Mark*, 393) follows Lane (*Mark*, 559) in suggesting that the crown of thorns was meant to represent the diadem-crown. Hurtado (*Mark*, 264) notes the intent of using the crown of thorns "was not to inflict physical pain but to lampoon Jesus as a clown-king." The reed parodies the royal sceptre (see Heil (*Mark*, 328)). Edwards (*Mark*, 466) considers their salute to be a parody of Caesar's salute.

familiar with carnival as expressed in the Roman Saturnalia,¹⁷³ and it was not unknown for carnival spectacles to be created: Philo records a carnival mockery using ordinary materials as regal apparatus.¹⁷⁴ Bakhtin notes that

characteristic for Rome was the stubborn vitality of ritualistic ridicule. Everyone is familiar with the soldiers' sanctioned ridicule of the commander returning in triumph, or the ritualistic laughter at Roman funerals.¹⁷⁵

The soldiers engage in carnival mockery of Jesus, and their actions are clearly ironic in light of the accusations that have been levelled against Jesus. Their actions follow closely a carnival sequence.

The ceremonial of the ritual of decrowning is counterposed to the ritual of crowning: regal vestments are stripped off the decrowned king, his crown is removed, the other symbols of authority are taken away, he is ridiculed and beaten.¹⁷⁶

Even without the dimension of carnival, their actions betray a double irony. Not only are the soldiers being ironic in their mock coronation of Jesus (and subsequent de-crowning), but at the level of dramatic irony, they clearly fail to realize the kingly nature of Jesus which has been revealed to the hearing-reader. When the soldiers' actions are perceived as being part of a carnival sequence, however, there is also a double irony: the carnivalesque element (that is, at the literary level) is also apparent in typically ambivalent relativity!

¹⁷³ Vincent Taylor (*Mark*, 647) notes parallels with the Saturnalia and the Babylonian Sacaea (including problems of pressing the analogies with the passion narrative too far). Brown (*Death*, 877) also notes ancient parallels with carnival festivals.

¹⁷⁴ Philo (*In Flaccum* 36.1–39.4) Ἦν τις μεμνηνὸς ὄνομα Καραβᾶς οὐ τὴν ἀγρίαν καὶ θηριώδη μονίαν-ἄσκητος γὰρ αὕτη γε καὶ τοῖς ἔχουσι καὶ τοῖς πλησιάζουσιν-, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀνειμένην καὶ μαλακωτέραν. οὗτος διημέρευε καὶ διενυκτέρευε γυμνὸς ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς οὔτε θάλπος οὔτε κρυμὸν ἐκτρεπόμενος, ἄθυρμα νηπίων καὶ μειρακίων σχολαζόντων. συνελάσαντες τὸν ἄθλιον ἄχρι τοῦ γυμνασίου καὶ στήσαντες μετέωρον ἵνα καθορῶτο πρὸς πάντων, βύβλον μὲν εὐρύναντες ἀντὶ διαδήματος ἐπιτιθέασιν αὐτοῦ τῇ κεφαλῇ, χαμαιστρώτῳ δὲ τὸ ἄλλο σῶμα περιβάλλουσιν ἀντὶ χλαμύδος, ἀντὶ δὲ σκίπτρου βραχύ τι παπύρου τμήμα τῆς ἐγχωρίου καθ' ὁδὸν ἐρριμμένον ἰδὼν τις ἀναδίδωσιν. ἐπεὶ δὲ ὡς ἐν θεατρικοῖς μίμοις τὰ παράσημα τῆς βασιλείας ἀνειλήφει καὶ διεκεκόσμητο εἰς βασιλέα, νεανίαί ράβδους ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων φέροντες ἀντὶ λογχοφόρων ἐκατέρωθεν εἰστήκεσαν μιμούμενοι δορυφόρους. εἴθ' ἕτεροι προσήεσαν, οἱ μὲν ὡς ἀσπασόμενοι, οἱ δὲ ὡς δικασόμενοι, οἱ δ' ὡς ἐντευζόμενοι περὶ κοινῶν πραγμάτων.

¹⁷⁵ *PND*, 58.

¹⁷⁶ *PDP*, 125.

All the symbolic aspects of this ceremonial of decrowning acquire a second and positive level of meaning—it is not naked, absolute negation and destruction... Moreover, precisely in this ritual of decrowning does there emerge with special clarity the carnival pathos of shifts and renewals, the image of constructive death.¹⁷⁷

At the level of the narrative, the soldiers who engaged in carnival mockery appear to be the same soldiers who will lead Jesus out and crucify him. There they shame Jesus completely by stripping him naked, and gambling for his clothes.¹⁷⁸ At third-level dialogue, the connection of the actions of the soldiers with Psalm 22 has long been noted at this point.¹⁷⁹ There is no mention in Mark of the authorisation for the superscription (15:26) having come from Pilate (recorded only in John 19:19), nor for what it was used. It is possible from the surrounding context that it was the soldiers who organised it—and this would serve as part of their overall mockery of Jesus.¹⁸⁰ It seems unlikely—especially given the actions of the soldiers—that Mark is trying to portray the Roman authorities positively.¹⁸¹ Indeed, such a concept seems untenable given the cruelty (and enjoyment) with which they are depicted as carrying it out.

¹⁷⁷ *PDP*, 125.

¹⁷⁸ See also Witherington (*Mark*, 395). France (*Mark*, 639) notes that they re-dress Jesus to lead him away to the place of crucifixion, as “a concession to Jewish sensibilities which found public nakedness offensive.”

¹⁷⁹ Boomershine (*Story journey*, 163) also notes the two perspectives involved with the action of crucifying him: “The first time, the narrator is an eyewitness who describes the crucifixion as it takes place, now... In the second report, the storyteller stops the story and speaks directly to... [the] listeners in the present moment of the telling of the story. This is a retrospective account from the perspective of a person years later looking back on the event.” But Boomershine presumes an eyewitness element which is not evident elsewhere; his claim for different levels of emotional expressiveness across both descriptions is also a large claim—it is difficult to assume psychological levels of interpretation within the ancient text. Witherington also notes the connection (*Mark*, 395).

¹⁸⁰ The other evangelists explicitly place the superscription over Jesus’ head. As France (*Mark*, 646) notes, such a placement “was both a cruel joke and a powerful deterrent.”

¹⁸¹ Witherington (*Mark*, 393) follows Myers (*Binding*, 379) that Mark is not seeking to portray the Jewish authorities positively. Witherington notes that Mark is “*kleinliteratur*... and portrays things from below and not by and large for those who are the elite of society.”

Simon of Cyrene

The identity of Simon of Cyrene has prompted considerable debate,¹⁸² as has the relationship that his named sons Alexander and Rufus have with the Markan community.¹⁸³ There is no indication whether he is Jew or Gentile, visitor at the feast or resident at Jerusalem. He appears and disappears just as suddenly from the narrative. His sole purpose (at first-level dialogue) is his involuntary response to the Roman demand that he carry Jesus' cross (or at least, more likely, the crossbeam). No 'threshold' is apparent: he is pressed into service by the Romans, and has no choice but to obey them. At second-level dialogue, however, he appears to represent the discipleship that the disciples are unable to demonstrate. Here is a different Simon—of Cyrene rather than Simon (Peter) of Galilee, who is compelled to carry Jesus' cross. Thus, for the hearing-reader, the comparison between the two Simons introduces another hint of irony into the passage: Simon of Galilee has been a leading disciple and has promised to follow Jesus but has fled; Simon of Cyrene appears to have no association with Jesus but carries his cross. Simon of Cyrene is therefore less a symbol of true discipleship than a 'foil' for Simon of Galilee.

Robbers/bandits crucified with Jesus

The reference to *ὄνειδίζω* at Mark 15:32 is the culmination of several actions of mockery and derision including *βλασφημέω* (15:29) and *ἐμπαίζω* (15:31), so that representatives of all of Israel—even to the robbers—were included in Jesus' humiliation.¹⁸⁴ There is also considerable irony in that those crucified on right and left are not his disciple-friends

¹⁸² Note B.K. Blount ("A socio-rhetorical analysis of Simon of Cyrene: Mark 15:21 and its parallels" *Semeia* 64, 1993, 171–178) who notes the character's "epideictic function, praising Simon... as an example of cross-bearing discipleship." Witherington (*Mark*, 394) concurs with Blount's assessment. France (*Mark*, 641) considers that Simon's action does not indicate symbolically that he was entering a life of discipleship, although Mark's readers may have seen more in the incident.

¹⁸³ France (*Mark*, 614) considers him a member of the Cyrenian Jews who had settled in Jerusalem, and that Alexander and Rufus (and possibly Simon) had become followers of Jesus as a result of this encounter.

¹⁸⁴ Boomershine (*Story journey*, 161) notes the verbal thread from the two-part mockery of the passersby, picked up by the chief priests and scribes and finally by those crucified with Jesus.

(such as James and John who had earlier requested positions on Jesus' right and left) but robbers.¹⁸⁵

At third level, an intriguing dialogue might be with the text of *Petronii Satiricon*, in the story of the Widow of Ephesus.¹⁸⁶ Certainly neither thief is stolen from the cross, and it is to Jesus between the thieves that the derisive call is directed to come down from the cross and save himself since he saved others (rather than one living man being saved by a dead man); it is game-playing rather than lovemaking that distracts the soldiers from guarding the thieves; and the absence of a thief's body is not the same as a resurrection. But at another level, many similar elements are present in both accounts. Perhaps more directly promising are the intertextual echoes of Isaiah 53:12 in the reference to the two ληστές—an intertextual reference which some of the textual evidence explicitly includes.

'Someone' with the sour wine

Jesus is offered wine twice (Mark 15:23, 36), a reference which, at third-level dialogue, connects back to the Last Supper narrative. The link with the wine there, and Jesus' vow concerning abstinence thereafter appears to be the motivation behind Jesus' refusal of wine at the

¹⁸⁵ See earlier discussion under 'Jesus' for the various views concerning ληστές. Boomershin (*Story journey*, 164) believes that the ληστές were political bandits or revolutionaries, and notes that for Jesus "to be executed in association with a revolution that he implicitly opposed was supremely ironic." Witherington (*Mark*, 396) notes that theft was not a capital offence, and therefore assumes that the word refers to insurrectionists here. France (*Mark*, 631) considers them possibly part of Barabbas' group, although he notes that the term had not achieved the technical sense that it would attract in Josephus. Heil (*Mark*, 331) and Edwards (*Mark*, 472) notes that the robbers become substitute disciples especially for James and John.

¹⁸⁶ Bakhtin (in *FTC*, 221) summarises the elements of the story well: "the husband's grave in the vault, the inconsolable young widow who is determined to die of grief and hunger by his grave, the young and cheerful legionnaire who guards the nearby crosses with their crucified thieves, the young widow's gloomy and ascetic stubbornness and longing for death that is broken by the infatuated young legionnaire, food and drink...on the husband's grave, their copulation on the same place, in the vault by the tomb (the conception of new life in direct association with death 'at the door of the grave'), the thief's corpse that is stolen from the cross during the couple's lovemaking, the death threatening the legionnaire as atonement for love. All this plus the crucifixion (at the wife's request) of her husband's corpse in place of the stolen corpse of the thief; the penultimate note—'It's better that a dead man should be crucified than that a living man should perish'...—and the final comic astonishment of the passers-by at a dead man's corpse crawling by itself up on a cross."

cross.¹⁸⁷ However, it is less apparent that the drink should be considered identical: in the first instance, it has been offered mixed with myrrh (ἐσμυρνισμένον οἶνον)—presumably as a narcotic. The later reference to sour wine (ὄξος) at Mark 15:36 suggests a different drink, but not necessarily a different person offering it—otherwise there would seem to be an unlikely number of individuals who were able to offer wine to those being crucified. The first offer may not have had the hostility implied in the Matthean account (Matt 27:34), but it would seem most likely that both offers came from among the soldiers.¹⁸⁸ The misunderstanding by those listening to the ‘cry of dereliction’ connects also with the statement made by the person who offers the sour wine (at Mark 15:36) about Elijah coming. The person offering the wine was most likely a soldier who at initial glance appears to be sympathetic to Jesus, offering a gesture of kindness.¹⁸⁹ However, his speech indicates continued mockery: the offer of the sour wine becomes a means of prolonging Jesus’ life, not so that he can be rescued by Elijah, but so that the mockery can continue.¹⁹⁰

The divine ‘voice’

The divine ‘voice’ remains ominously silent throughout the passion narrative, until the moment of Jesus’ death. For the three hours beforehand, the presence of darkness is indicative of the absence of divine presence.¹⁹¹ At the moment of Jesus’ death, the curtain¹⁹² of the Temple

¹⁸⁷ Boomershine (*Story journey*, 162) notes the connection, concluding that “Jesus keeps his vow of abstinence at the cost of greater pain.” Similarly Heil (*Mark*, 330)

¹⁸⁸ Contra France (*Mark*, 642), who surveys various alternatives for the identity of this person or persons at 15:23, including a tentative conclusion that it might have been women of Jerusalem. Edwards (*Mark*, 471) agrees. France (*Mark*, 642) indicates that the ‘someone’ at 15:36 was probably a Jewish bystander because of the continued reference to Elijah. But it is no less likely that a soldier, overhearing the bystander’s jibe, continues the mockery.

¹⁸⁹ So Witherington (*Mark*, 394), who notes the painkilling effect of myrrh, and also notes (*Mark*, 399) that it was the common beverage for a soldier or day labourer to drink.

¹⁹⁰ Boomershine (*Story journey*, 168) calls this the “final twist of disdain.” Contra Edwards (*Mark*, 477) who appears to see this offer as a “gesture of compassion,” and misses the potential for mockery that the action involves.

¹⁹¹ Heil (*Mark*, 334) notes that this supernatural darkness connects with Amos 8:9, since Jesus’ death functions “as a preliminary event of God’s end-time with significance for the whole world.”

¹⁹² Witherington (*Mark*, 400) sees καταπέτασμα as meaning the inner veil. (See also Edwards (*Mark*, 478) who sees it as the inner veil on linguistic grounds, but appears to want to argue for the outer curtain on the basis of its visibility to the centurion).

is torn from top to bottom, as the divine 'voice' effectively speaks judgement¹⁹³ on the Temple and the departure of the 'Presence' from within it. To some extent the tearing of the curtain is an enacted version of opacity giving way to transparency—at least for the hearing-reader;¹⁹⁴ yet the full meaning is still veiled! Irony-as-a-form-of-silence appears to be evident at this point: part of this irony is that the only person who (at least according to some commentators) sees the Temple curtain being torn is the centurion, from whom its meaning would be veiled!

Centurion

Various attempts have been made to indicate what prompts the centurion's declaration.¹⁹⁵ Most of them, however, rely on the inference at the most obvious level, that the centurion could be said to make the most unambiguous 'confession' of Jesus' identity.¹⁹⁶ But the words reflect the narrator's understanding; there is no direct evidence that the centurion's attitude to Jesus was sincere or 'accurate'. Is he being mocking or ironic, like most of the characters' speech throughout the Passion narrative? Often taken as a faith-declaration,¹⁹⁷ the centurion's comment is more

¹⁹³ Painter (*Mark*, 207) draws a helpful contrast between the baptism and the death of Jesus, noting that the heavens were rent at baptism (and now the curtain is rent); the spirit comes at baptism and leaves (the Temple) at Jesus' death, therefore showing that the veil tearing is a sign of divine judgement. According to Josephus (*De bello Judaico libri vii*, 5.213) the veil was embroidered with sun, moon and stars; thus the rending of the curtain forms a cosmic inclusio with the baptism where the heavens are torn apart. See David Ulansey, "The heavenly veil torn: Mark's cosmic 'inclusio'" *JBL* 110, 1991, 123–25. But Gundry (*Mark*, 972) makes the valid point that "Mark cannot expect an audience who requires his explanation of Jewish matters to know the pictorial design embroidered on the outer veil".

¹⁹⁴ Fowler, (*Reader*, 161–162) has an excellent outline of opacity as a major strategy of indirection in Mark.

¹⁹⁵ France (*Mark*, 659) notes such possibilities as the unnatural darkness, Jesus' last words, Jesus' final cry, and the tearing of the Temple curtain. Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 452) comment that "[f]or Mark's readers around 70 CE the veil portent at Jesus' death would help to explain the (real or impending) destruction of the Jerusalem Temple."

¹⁹⁶ It is necessary to avoid reading the Matthean or Lukan accounts back into Mark, since the other gospels make the centurion's statement into an unambiguous faith declaration.

¹⁹⁷ See Martin (*Mark*, 183), who concludes that "Jesus dies as his expiring cry echoes from the cross; the veil which hitherto had hidden God's glory from human view now collapses since its function is at an end, and that glory shines forth from the crucified, not to overwhelm and destroy the beholder but to lead... to faith and to the confession, Truly this man was God's Son!" Others who conclude that the centurion makes a kind of faith-confession (or at least recognition) include Belo (*Lecture matérialiste*, 229), Evans (*Mark* 510, 512), Heil, (*Mark*, 336–338), Lane (*Mark*, 575–576), Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, (*In the company of Jesus*, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, 43, 57, 59,

suitably perceived as heavily ironic.¹⁹⁸ The threshold is established in Jesus' cry of dereliction and the subsequent events surrounding his death, yet the centurion does not cross the threshold any more than does any other character in the Passion narrative. MacDonald notes that the centurion's words are gloating—"a well-known and ancient speech act mocking the arrogance of the victim and enhancing the stature of the gloater."¹⁹⁹ The centurion gloats over one whose charge has been associated with kingship, who has called on God to save him, and about whom others have hurled jibes directed at his (supposed) claims, yet who now hangs dead on the cross. The incongruity of the situation causes the centurion to state sarcastically that this was truly a son of god! Yet at second-level dialogue, his declaration concerning Jesus—although uttered with heavy irony—is more true than he knows, and hence doubly ironic.²⁰⁰ The hearing-reader knows the truth but the character—like most other characters in the passion narrative—does not understand what he is saying. The centurion then functions as the character that declares definitively that Jesus is dead, when Pilate enquires concerning Jesus at the time of Joseph of Arimathea's request. However, this 'witness' to Jesus' death does not necessarily imply any deeper level of 'witness' on the centurion's behalf.²⁰¹

193, 202), David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey and Donald Michie (*Mark as story: an introduction to the narrative of a Gospel* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999, 114), Kingsbury (*Christology*, 480), Schweizer (*Mark*, 396), Telford (*Mark*, 20, 108, 123), van Iersel (*Mark*, 480), Waetjen (*Reordering*, 238–239), Edwards (*Mark*, 479), France (*Mark*, 659–660). Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 449). Witherington (*Mark*, 400) sees it as a positive exclamation, but he notes the absence of the definite article indicating the centurion does not make a formal faith-declaration but a comment into which the Markan audience would read more.

¹⁹⁸ Juell (*Mark*, 146) reads "the centurion's statement in light of the other 'confessions' among Jesus' adversaries. Like the chief priest, the guards who taunt Jesus to prophesy, the mockers at the foot of the cross, Pilate, and the rest of the Roman soldiers, the centurion may say more than he knows. If the confession is sarcastic, it would fit the general tone of irony." Others who argue for an ironic understanding of the centurion's statement include Myers (*Binding*, 393–394); E.S. Johnson Jr., ("Mark 15,39 and the so-called confession of the Roman centurion" *Biblica* 81, 2000, 406–413); and Whitney T. Shiner ("The ambiguous pronouncement of the centurion and the shrouding of meaning in Mark" *JNT* 78, 2000, 3–22).

¹⁹⁹ MacDonald (*Homeric epics*, 143). He draws the parallel with Achilles' gloat over Hector.

²⁰⁰ Edwards (*Mark*, 446) correctly notes the irony that "the two most complete christological confessions from humans occur in the mouths of those responsible for Jesus' death: the high priest in 14:61, and the centurion at the cross in 15:39!"

²⁰¹ Contra Heil (*Mark*, 341).

The women

The women at the cross present an initial enigma to the hearing-reader: are they the positive alternative to the male disciples, in that they at least followed Jesus faithfully to the end?²⁰² Their distance from the cross (Mark 15:40), and their subsequent fleeing from the empty tomb (Mark 16:8) has caused some scholars to take a less positive view of the women.²⁰³ The intermediate position of Elizabeth Malbon is of a complex picture of disciples who are fallible followers: serving and closely following even to the end of Jesus' ministry (a sign of followership), yet standing at a distance from the cross (a sign of fallibility), and (later) failing to deliver God's message. Discipleship, then, is understood as the tension between success and failure.²⁰⁴

This picture is not so clear, however, at second-level dialogue. It could be argued that the clause αἱ ὅτι ἦν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ καὶ διηκόνουν αὐτῷ (15:41) indicates an abrupt introduction of the women whom Mark may have neglected to introduce earlier—thus representing careless story-telling.²⁰⁵ But the purpose of this clause could be another example of irony-as-a-form-of-silence. Since several of the

²⁰² See Myers (*Binding*, 396–397), Witherington (*Mark*, 401), Mary-Ann Beavis ("Women as models of faith in Mark" *BTB* 18, 1998, 3–9); Heil (*Mark*, 338) sees the three named women as effective substitutes for the inner circle of male disciples—Peter, James and John. Myers (*Binding*, 396–397) sees these women as "the 'lifeline' of the discipleship narrative." Tolbert (*Sowing*, 291–293) sees the women throughout Mark (except for Herodias and her daughter) as representatives of the good soil in the Sower parable. Schüssler-Fiorenza (*In memory*, 321–323) sees the women as having properly understood and practised true discipleship, together with others distanced from the centre of religious and political power. "Though the twelve have forsaken Jesus, betrayed and denied him, the women disciples, by contrast, are found under the cross, risking their own lives and safety... They are thus characterised as Jesus' true relatives." Schüssler-Fiorenza (*In memory*, 320). She notes the three verbs as critical to an understanding of the women at Mark 15:41: ἀκολουθεῖω—indicating a positive decision in response to the call for discipleship; διακονέω—indicating that they practised the true servant-leadership required of disciples; συναναβαίνειω indicating that they were prepared to risk being with Jesus under the cross.

²⁰³ For a more negative portrayal see Winsome Munro, ("Women disciples?" 227), although Munro was the first to portray the women as disciples—prior to her groundbreaking study, the women were considered only for the service they provided, rather than as disciples. The lateness of the reference to them is, according to Munro, an attempt to obscure or suppress their role. (See previous discussion, in chapter 2.)

²⁰⁴ Malbon, "Fallible followers," 46.

²⁰⁵ So Fowler (*Reader*, 111), although Fowler also questions whether it is Markan indirection at work.

women are named at Mark 15:40 and Mark 15:47²⁰⁶ it is perhaps suggestive that, however much they have followed more closely than the male disciples, they too participate in the general failure of all characters within the passion narrative. If one of the women is Jesus' mother, then this would then suggest the theme of failure extends also to Jesus' family.²⁰⁷

At third-level dialogue, the reference to the women who from τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ καὶ διηκόνουν αὐτῷ has an illuminating parallel in *Vita Apollonii*.²⁰⁸ The role of accompanying women who follow and serve appears to have been perceived dubiously, since such women would be expected to be courtesan-companions or slaves; in this passage, Apollonius outlines several (feminine) virtues, making clear that his companions are 'ladies'—a witticism that Corley correctly notes would be

nonsensical apart from this underlying connection between slave women and promiscuity. Thus, the women in Mark 15:40–41 could easily be mistaken by an ancient reader, not as disciples, but sexually available slaves.²⁰⁹

The late reference to their presence at the cross is therefore slightly disquieting, especially since there is no explicit reference to the male disciples being present. It becomes even more disturbing to discover the women being ἀπὸ μακρόθεν (Mark 15:40), since this also connects co-textually with Peter's description as having followed ἀπὸ μακρόθεν (Mark 14:54).²¹⁰ The hearing-reader is caused to consider that the same

²⁰⁶ Although note that some debate has occurred concerning the exact identity of the women, given the apparent differences between the two lists. See Edwards (*Mark*, 485–486).

²⁰⁷ See Crossan, "Mark and the relatives," 81–113; Kathleen E. Corley, "Slaves, servants and prostitutes: gender and social class in Mark" in A.-J. Levine (ed.) *A feminist companion to Mark*, 202; but contra Gundry, *Mark*, 977.

²⁰⁸ *Vita Apollonii* 1.19.44–1.20.10 "Τοιοῦδε μὲν ἐταίρου καὶ ἐραστοῦ ἔτυχε, ᾧ τὸ πολὺ τοῦ βίου συνεπορεύθη. παριόντας δὲ αὐτοὺς ἐς τὴν μέσην τῶν ποταμῶν ὁ τελώνης ὁ ἐπιβεβλημένος τῷ Ζεύγματι πρὸς τὸ πινάκιον ἦγε καὶ ἡρώτα, ὅ τι ἀπάγοιεν, ὁ δὲ Ἀπολλώνιος 'ἀπάγω' ἔφη 'σωφοροσύνην δικαιοσύνην ἀρετὴν ἐγκράτειαν ἀνδρείαν ἄσκησιν,' πολλὰ καὶ οὕτω θήλεα εἴρας ὀνόματα. ὁ δ' ἤδη βλέπων τὸ ἑαυτοῦ κέρδος 'ἀπόγραψαι οὖν' ἔφη 'τάς δούλας'. ὁ δὲ 'οὐκ ἔξεστιν,' εἶπεν 'οὐ γὰρ δούλας ἀπάγω ταύτας, ἀλλὰ δεσποίνας.'"

²⁰⁹ Corley, "Slaves, servants and prostitutes", 191–221.

²¹⁰ Although Corley ("Slaves," 211) suggests: "It may be concern for Greco-Roman propriety that leads Mark to have the women stand 'from afar' during the crucifixion proper, although he is probably influenced by literary precursors as well. These women are probably waiting to perform the burial tasks often assigned to women."

'distance' between Peter and Jesus is also represented in the women's actions here.²¹¹ Similarly, at Mark 15:47 the women are connected co-textually with what will occur at Mark 16:1; despite the potentially dubious nature of their presence, they have become the necessary witnesses to Jesus' burial and the location of the tomb.

Joseph of Arimathea

It would seem unlikely that the Markan Joseph is portrayed as a disciple, given the collapse of the 'discipleship narrative' and his own implied complicity in the trial of Jesus (Mark 14:53).²¹² Certainly the Matthean Joseph is referred to as a disciple of Jesus, and secret discipleship is also claimed in John's Gospel; the Lukan Joseph is claimed not to have consented to the decision and action of the Council. There is a danger that such characterisation can be read back into Mark's Gospel, where there is no evidence on the narrative plane that Joseph of Arimathea was *not* involved in the decision of the Council, nor any claims for discipleship on his behalf. At most, Joseph was a prominent member of the Council who was waiting for the kingdom of God,²¹³ but it is most likely that he, like all the other characters in the passion narrative, have shown various levels of failure to understand Jesus and the nature of discipleship.²¹⁴ However, Mark's Gospel is the only one to record Joseph's boldness in asking Pilate for Jesus' body.²¹⁵ A third-level dialogue issue presents itself at this point: Mark uses τὸ πτῶμα at Mark 15:45 (although not at Mark 15:43!), and this connects co-textually

²¹¹ So Kinukawa ("Women disciples of Jesus" in Amy-Jill Levine (ed.) *A feminist companion to Mark*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, 177) rightly comments: "At least we can say that Mark is not unreservedly praising the behaviour of the women."

²¹² Contra Heil (*Mark*, 341), who sees Joseph's use of linen cloth as another indication that he is a substitute disciple. Williams (*Followers*, 189–191) also has Joseph as a positive minor character. France (*Mark*, 666) sees Joseph as at least a supporter if not a disciple. Edwards (*Mark*, 488) sees him as a model disciple.

²¹³ Hooker (*Mark*, 381) has Joseph primarily concerned to avoid the curse upon the land of an unburied corpse on a feast day (cf. Deut 21:23). (So also Gundry 982–983). France (*Mark*, 662) sees the qualifying phrase δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν προσδεχόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ as an introductory commendation that suggests Joseph's high standing in the Markan church. While this may be possible, there is nothing to directly indicate this at the level of the text. Marcus (*Way*, 182) helpfully notes the irony that "Joseph should no longer be waiting, since the kingdom of God has now been revealed with...the crucified Jesus."

²¹⁴ Comparative views on the nature of discipleship can be traced (*inter alia*) in the views of Weeden, *Mark*; Best, *Following Jesus*; Dewey, "Disciples"; Malbon, *In the company*.

²¹⁵ Witherington (*Mark*, 402) notes "the Roman magistrate would only release the body to the nearest relatives. The contrast with the case of the Baptist...is noteworthy."

with (Mark 6:29) where the Baptizer's body is similarly described.²¹⁶ As such, Joseph stands in contrast to Jesus' disciples who (unlike John's disciples at Mark 6:29) have deserted him: although Joseph may not necessarily be a substitute disciple, he performs several functions that should rightly have been completed by the disciples. In the process, he appears to become 'unclean' in the process of dealing with Jesus' body—no small concern given the importance of the forthcoming feast day.²¹⁷ Mark uses the rather undignified ἐνείλω to describe Joseph wrapping Jesus' body (Mark 15:46), compared with Matthew's (Matt 27:59) and Luke's (Lk 23:53) usage of ἐντυλίσσω. (John's use of δέω (John 19:40) makes for yet another contrast!) The reference to the linen cloth, suggests Joseph was probably rich.²¹⁸ Luke (23:53) and Matthew (27:59–60) indicate (respectively) that it was a new tomb, and that it was Joseph's own tomb. However, none of those details is recorded here. In fact, the character of Joseph of Arimathea remains shadowy within the narrative. The hearing-reader is prompted to wonder whether he was implicated in the trial of Jesus, whether he has been prepared to become ritually unclean in the process of dealing with Jesus' body, and whether he represents some kind of disciple-figure—if only as a 'foil' for the disciples failure to deal with Jesus' body. Mark, however, maintains an ironic silence!

Significance of the dialogical 'voices'

Each of the main characters other than Jesus serves as a warning to hearing-readers to consider how genuine, courageous and resolute is their own commitment to follow Jesus. Jesus' 'voice' announces the Betrayer and at that precise moment, the Betrayer's 'voice' is evident in the garden. The 'voices' of the arresting crowd are shown to be unclean by Jesus, who announces the fulfilment of Scripture. On cue, the 'voices' of the disciples disappear permanently, including the 'voice' of the author, which also flees from the text—having been stripped bare. This 'voice' will resurface to function as a post-resurrection witness, but will maintain an ironic silence throughout the remainder of the passion narrative. The blasphemous 'voices' of the Jewish leaders

²¹⁶ As Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 454) rightly note.

²¹⁷ Contra Donahue and Harrington (*Mark*, 455) who consider it more likely that Joseph would have given orders to servants to carry out the tasks to avoid ritual defilement.

²¹⁸ See Witherington (*Mark*, 402). This does not presuppose that Jesus' own "social class...brought him political connections," as Corley ("Women" 216) suggests.

accuse Jesus' 'voice' of blasphemy. He remains silent, while echoes of his prophetic 'voice' resound in the ear of Peter. Peter's wavering 'voice' in the courtyard when the increasingly-confident 'voice' of the servant-girl challenges him, causes hearing-readers (especially the (first) hearing-readers) on a re-reading of Mark to 'voice' their relief: if they have not stood firm in the face of persecution, even their subsequent witness can be helpful, once they have returned to the Galilee and truly understood the nature of discipleship as the way of the Cross.

The carnival mockery in the 'voices' of the Jewish leaders and the attendants/guards attempt to provoke a response from Jesus. His silence while they abuse him finds echoes in the 'voice' of Isaiah's suffering servant. In a similar manner, the mocking 'voice' of Pilate and carnival abuse by the soldiers, combined with the murderous 'voices' of the Jewish leaders (and ultimately the crowd) fail to elicit anything more than the most enigmatic of responses from Jesus. The crescendo of mockery from Jewish leaders, bystanders and even the bandits crucified with Jesus, culminates in Jesus' 'voice' crying out his total abandonment. Yet even this is distorted by the 'voices' of those nearby, resulting in further mockery. Finally, Jesus' 'voice' is silenced, and in response the divine 'voice' pronounces judgment on the Temple; the centurion's ironic 'voice' completes the mockery. Distant women's 'voices,' silent throughout the passion, now move to help bury Jesus, and the enigmatic 'voice' of Joseph successfully requests the body from Pilate.

The 'voices' of the narrative fall silent, and the hearing-reader's 'voice' is raised in protest: hearing the irony in all that has been said, the hearing-reader also hears the silence of the author concerning many details that need explanation. But the hearing-reader must also keep silent until the resurrection and the return to Galilee.

A NOT-SO-FINAL CONCLUSION

It seems presumptuous to append a conclusion to work that seeks to apply Bakhtinian categories, since Bakhtin's concept of unfinalizability is a reminder that no work is ever complete. Indeed, it might be more truly reflective of Bakhtin to include blank pages at the end of each chapter so that others can respond to, and participate in, the dialogue that is commenced. It remains to be seen whether the voices in this text call forth other voices to challenge (and correct) but more importantly to continue the dialogue. Applying Bakhtinian categories to Markan studies can only be an interpretative appropriation of Bakhtin's ideas. Whether the understanding of Bakhtin expressed in the first chapter finds resonances (or is judged to be a distant voice, not consonant with Bakhtin's true voice), the application of that understanding to Markan characterisation has proven an exciting challenge. In a sense, any conclusion cannot be a final word—the journey through the study is the critical aspect.

What can be said, then, in reflection on the work? The initial interest in applying Bakhtin to Markan characterisation consisted of the possibility of avoiding the problem of applying modern constructions of character (for example “round”, “flat” and the like) to ancient characterisation. The Bakhtinian concepts of interindividuality and character-zones seemed helpful to such consideration.

Interindividuality seemed to fit better with the circum-Mediterranean concept of dyadic personality, rather than the individualism of the West and its related psychology of character. Bakhtin promised to be helpful, therefore, in addressing the problem of considering ancient character through modern categories. But the implications of applying Bakhtin proved to be more far-reaching.

The concept of unfinalisability was also helpful, since for Bakhtin a character is a point of convergence (or divergence) of voices within and between texts that actualises differently with every reading of a given text as the hearing-reader identifies and stratifies the voices in the text. Such unfinalisability goes beyond the realm of mere characterisation, however. The long history of scholarship associated with Mark has provided a vital contribution to an understanding of Mark;

but the same scholarship has also ‘changed’ the text as it has entered into dialogue with it.

Unlike other approaches to ancient characterisation that sees character as purely static, with Bakhtin’s concept of interindividual character, there must always exist the possibility of change as a result of dialogic interaction with the other, since characters in a Bakhtinian sense can only be considered to be ‘alive’ to the extent that they remain incomplete and unfinalized. At this boundary between interindividual characters, then, occurs a crisis point at which one or other (or both) of the interindividual characters is brought to a threshold—a point at which choice exists within the dialogic interaction to accept or reject the ideological construct proposed by the other; and thus for each interindividual character to change. It would seem helpful therefore, for future considerations of character within the Gospels to be understood in terms of the greater complexity that a Bakhtinian approach can provide.

But unfinalisability and interindividuality were, of themselves, only a small part of the Bakhtin ‘pantheon.’ In the course of attempting to gain sufficient working understanding of Bakhtin, several other categories showed even more promise in terms of applicability to Mark’s gospel. The overarching concept of *dialogue* became an essential component in the approach of this study; and such concepts as *chronotope*, *genre-memory* and *carnival* also became central.

Bakhtin’s metalinguistics thus provided an alternative approach to characterisation that, although a literary approach, reached remarkably similar conclusions to some insights from redaction-criticism. The synchronic/diachronic dichotomy becomes less problematic with a Bakhtinian approach, as Reed and others have noted.¹ Bakhtin potentially restores the balance between the ‘voices’ of author, text and reader. More work needs to be done in this area, but the possibilities are significant. For example, is the hearing-reader in this study merely an ideal reader—a hypothetical construct? What scope is there for a possible ‘first hearing-reader’—potentially partly a diachronic approach? What about a resisting hearing-reader—for example a contemporary feminist hearing-reader? There are traces of a potential *resisting* hearing-reader within this study (for example there are issues raised within the dancing-daughter episode and the Syro-Phoenecian encounter) that

¹ See discussion in “Introduction.”

feminist hearing-readers may develop further. It is beyond the scope of this study to explore more of the range of possible hearing-readers; and in any case they would only be constructs of the author of this work. Each new hearing-reader will bring varying insights. How, too, might authorial 'intent' be reconstructed with the concept of dialogue? These and many other questions become significant, since Bakhtin's categories imply a large-scale change in the way we approach Markan characterisation.

Part of the problem faced by anyone seeking to apply Bakhtin to the New Testament is the confusing nature of Bakhtin's textology and terminology. It became necessary to outline an understanding of Bakhtin that would at least form a basis for such a study. It is a matter for judgment by others as to whether this understanding has validity in terms of the broad consensus of Bakhtin scholarship. Equally, the extent to which such an understanding can be applied to the Gospels also becomes a matter for judgment.

While some may question the appropriateness of applying Bakhtinian categories to Mark, these categories provide a radically different way of viewing characterisation, and the Gospel as a whole. Some scholars may be especially wary of the application of Bakhtinian categories—especially carnival—to New Testament texts. In response to such concerns, it is evident that the results of this study have not been an eccentric reading divorced from insights gained from other disciplines. For example, some matters gained from applying Bakhtinian categories are similar in expression to insights already noted—especially those concerning irony within the gospel. This is hardly surprising, since carnival is, by definition, heavily ironic. Examples of this include the carnivalesque satire with the Legion and the pigs, and many of the carnival elements noted in the passion narrative. Yet while some similar conclusions have been drawn, others are fresh, as has been seen, and as will be re-iterated below.

The most obvious—and extensive—of Bakhtin's categories is that of dialogue. The concept of different levels of dialogue was important in the course of this study. It could be argued, however, that it *all* looks like dialogue; and if everything is dialogue then what difference does it make? But this is precisely the issue—a dialogical view of the world and therefore a dialogical view of texts is at the heart of Bakhtin's work. Even the history of Markan scholarship itself could be considered to be an exercise in dialogical interaction with the text.

For Bakhtin, all of existence—including the words and thoughts of individuals—enter into dialogic relationship, and exhibit intertextuality in both time and space. Bakhtin's central concept of dialogue sees characters as voice sources in the text. The interactions that occur among such voices, together with the interactions with the 'voice' of the addressee, and even interactions with other text-voices, is the locus of study in a Bakhtinian analysis of character. Three different levels of dialogue were noted: first-level dialogue, occurring between interindividual characters, second-level dialogue occurring primarily between the text and the hearing-reader, and third-level dialogue occurring co-textually and inter-textually among texts to give an indication of generic contacts.

Thus, from first-level dialogue, character can be viewed as open-ended constructs which function interindividually, and which draw the (implied) reader to the threshold also. Threshold encounters between interindividual characters therefore became an important first determinant in considering construction of character. But it is not only at the level of the text that insights were gained from the threshold encounters between interindividual characters. It is at second-level dialogue with the hearing-reader that threshold encounters occur between the hearing-reader and the 'voices' in the text. The 'word-with-a-sideward-glance' provided insight into the manner in which the author anticipates the hearing-reader's response at the threshold and delivers it a polemical blow (for example with the Syro-Phoenecian woman threshold encounter). Similarly the threshold created with the hearing-reader when Herod and others are drawing conclusions concerning Jesus' identity, functions as a word-with-a-sideward-glance. In a similar manner, the hearing-reader recognises a 'word-with-a-loop-hole' that allows Jesus' self-disclosure to remain minimal to all except the hearing-reader. In this way, there is a certain unfinalisability to Jesus' identity. This aspect, coupled with the carnivalesque masking and unmasking evident throughout the text, gives an important clue to the secrecy motif—something that appears to be maintained beyond the closure of the narrative.

Third-level dialogue, occurring with inter-textual or co-textual references, is the point at which issues of genre and chronotopicity became significant. It was necessary to find an approach that recognised the importance of genre-related questions, while also recognising historical dimensions. The problem of a singular generic paradigm is not sustainable despite all attempts. Is it possible that Bakhtinian categories take us as scholars to a new 'threshold' in consideration of Markan genre?

In this study it became appropriate to choose chronotope as one structuring matrix for understanding different sections of the Gospel. The possibility that there is more than one chronotope explicated by Bakhtin that may be present in Mark might help to explain the substantial differences between different parts of the Gospel—especially the passion narrative compared with what comes before it. Yet some of the chronotopic similarities might suggest motivic elements so that some of Bakhtin's chronotopes may be sub-types (sub-chronotopes?) or at least overlap.

At this point, the concept of 'genre-memory' connected most readily as a mechanism for understanding the conscious and unconscious dialogue occurring between implied author and hearing-reader on the one hand, and referential and inferential allusions to other texts and chronotopes on the other. Since genre-memory reflects the tendency of genres to change with each usage, and "remember" such usage, the Markan author may have been influenced by various generic contacts, and the genre or genres involved imposed on the new text various generic elements of which the author may not have been directly aware. The debate continues concerning whether or not biography is the closest generic parallel to the Gospels. In this study, the claim is made that it is the literature of the ordinary people—the vulgar classes—that provides more useful points of comparison.

Perhaps part of the debate concerns isolating a single generic paradigm for Gospels as a genre. But is it necessary to see each of the canonical Gospels as reflecting similar literary concerns, or is it possible that the generic contacts and influences behind Mark are different from the other three Gospels? This is an area for more research. Certainly Luke would appear to show greater affinity with the chronotope of biographical time; and to an extent so does Matthew. Thus, it is even difficult to conclude what 'gospel' is—the use made of it by other gospel-writers appears to have affected the 'genre-memory' of gospel. This is only to be expected. But the extent to which canonical Mark may have been influenced by antecedent 'gospels'—even earlier forms of Mark—will remain another matter for continuing study in the quest for the elusive 'grail' of gospel genre. This study would suggest that such a pursuit is ultimately futile, because it commences with a wrong premise.

As far as Mark itself is concerned, it may be even more 'isolated' as a gospel since it shows signs of earlier genre-memory than say Luke (far less John). The possibility exists of a Markan 'genre-memory' that

itself has ‘created’ the work—and in turn further shapes the genre-memory of gospel for the future. Mark (as the likely earliest canonical gospel) would have shaped the genre-memory of the later gospels, even although they may reflect the incorporation of other chronotopic elements.

Whichever chronotope or chronotopes may be considered to have the best fit for Mark, it needs to be acknowledged that there are multiple generic influences that may potentially be present. Moreover, coupled with the issue of chronotopicity is the matter of carnival and the carnivalesque—that pressure towards “novelness” that means that all generic forms from the ancient world have been transformed (or perhaps ‘degraded’ from their pure form) by it. For this reason the Bakhtinian category of genre-memory may help scholars think more openly and flexibly about Markan genre.

The possibility of a Markan genre-memory—which may differ from that of the other Gospels—suggests multiple generic contacts or influences from many areas; but the Gospel appears to contain many obvious resonances within the literature of the common or ‘vulgar’ classes. That Mark is a ‘vulgar’ gospel—written for the ‘vulgar’ classes—does not detract from its importance as a literary work with close ties to orality; indeed debate between orality and writtenness is partly addressed within the Bakhtinian categories of primary and secondary speech-genres.

Just how ‘vulgar’ Mark’s Gospel can be seen to be, is something that becomes apparent from Bakhtin’s concept of carnival. If Mark were written for the ‘vulgar’ classes, the subversive element of carnival could be expected to be evident, despite the preference of intervening centuries to diminish such ideas. It is likely that the area of carnival as applied to Gospel will produce the strongest reactions among scholars. Yet the picture of Jesus we receive in the Gospels is one that is subversive, and closely aligned with the ‘vulgar classes’ of people. The influence of carnival—at a literary (carnavalesque) level and otherwise—must be anchored within the milieu of the common people because it is subversive of the dominant hegemony. Mark is a ‘vulgar’ gospel and its ‘earthiness’ resonates with the everyday concerns of ordinary people of the ‘vulgar’ classes. As such, it may prove refreshing to its first hearing-readers, and also to post-modern hearing-readers who may wish to move beyond mere suspicion of metanarratives. Carnival is potentially subversive of the ‘religiosity’ involved in a monolithically serious reading of the text. It also may be seen to subvert the dominant hegemony of biblical interpretation itself!

Carnival thus became the choice for the second structuring matrix for examining the Gospel, producing sometimes disquieting results. The carnivalesque series associated with the 'grotesque body'—the presence of eating, drinking, defecating, and sexual elements—has links with socio-cultural questions of purity and the maintenance of body-boundaries. But the transgression of bodily boundaries—especially by the Markan Jesus—is a scandalous carnival element that has been reduced in the other Gospels. It was necessary therefore to be rigorous in confining the focus to the narrative of Mark, and not allow any crossover of 'voices' from other gospel texts. The subversive nature of carnival provided an additional challenge in the way the Markan Jesus could be a carnival clown or fool, whose masking and unmasking was at the heart of the dialogue with the hearing-reader. Carnival masking provided a way of understanding the secrecy motif that dominates throughout Mark. Carnival also serves to blur the generic derivatives of the Gospel, as has already been noted.

Thus, carnivalesque influences can be seen to be evident throughout the Gospel, and contribute to an understanding of the characters, as well as to key motifs that have an impact upon the characters, such as the secrecy motif and even the passion itself. The ultimate carnival inversion is where Jesus Christ, the Son of God (from the prefatory title), is crucified.

The possibility of discerning carnivalesque series such as the eating, defecation and sexual series, contributes several aspects. Among these are a greater understanding of some of the troubling emotions (and sayings) attributed to the Markan Jesus. Examples of this include the strength of emotion exhibited by Jesus toward the leper (Mark 1:40–45), and his apparent rudeness to the Syro-Phoenecian woman (Mark 7:24–30). A carnivalesque reading of the threshold encounter with the Syro-Phoenecian woman that acknowledges the parasexual connotations, makes sense of Jesus' harsh response. In a similar manner, a carnivalesque reading of the dancing-daughter will include the parasexual connotations, and make sense of her heightened demand (even beyond Herodias' suggestion) as resistance to the authority of her step-father and his sexual advances.

The carnivalesque is also evident in the subversions that occur at different points—whether the subversion of the purity system, or of that subversion expressed toward the (Roman) Legion. Carnival humour is evident when Bartimaeus appears before Jesus in his underwear or the unnamed young man flees naked in Gethsemane. The carnivalesque elements of the fantastic provide some insight into the Transfiguration,

especially in light of some similar references in Graeco-Roman literature. In the passion narrative, carnival humour (however muffled) can be discerned where the inner circle of disciples are repeatedly caught napping, and where Jesus engages in a dialogue over a severed ear that remains on the ground between him and the arresting party.

The possibility of Pilate's release of a prisoner *to* the crowd (for carnival abuse) casts a different light on this aspect of the passion narrative. The prisoner exchange is not therefore a mark of leniency on Pilate's behalf, but more indicative of a sadistic nature—something that accords more readily with the historical portrait of Pilate from Josephus and others. In a similar manner, there may be a carnival element in the crowd's "crucify him." Like the carnival "Sia ammazzato" of the Roman Saturnalia—this may have been a form of carnival abuse and explains how a crowd that had been sympathetic a week before can now be manipulated by the Jewish leaders into a level of carnival abuse that goes further than the crowd may have intended.

The carnival masking/unmasking of Jesus has been evident throughout the narrative, often with comic results. People who are asked to remain silent do the opposite, thus risking tearing away the mask; others such as Herod seek to mask him differently; Jesus refuses the 'Son of David' mask of Bartimaeus (at least in the form offered); Jesus finally removes the mask for the high priest, only to have the high priest forcibly remask him; the centurion speaks ironically of the mask—which turns out to be a double irony unmasked only to the hearing-reader; and then the ultimate (although not final) point at the empty tomb when the women find *only* the mask, and then proceed to re-mask Jesus by their silence. Thus the carnival masking/unmasking remains unfinalised within the narrative.

Thus, within the two structuring matrices of chronotope and carnival, it became possible for character-zones to be examined in terms of the three different levels of dialogue. The speech-utterances evident in the text indicated the dialogical thresholds to which interindividual characters are drawn. Such (first-level) dialogue between character-zones provides a set of dialogical voices whose significance can be explored; but the second-level dialogue with the hearing-reader creates another set of voices—the authoring of which may belong not just to the original author of the Gospel, but also to the hearing-reader. The extent to which other texts contribute similar voices becomes the subject of third-level dialogue; the contribution of popular Graeco-Roman literature to the Markan genre-memory meant that these were the voices

that dominated in each chapter. Other voices from other literature (including the promise of what may come from Jewish novels) need to be explored further.

Bakhtin's dialogism gives due weight to the episodic nature of Mark; that it comprises individual episodes to a much greater extent than most modern literature. It is the dialogical interaction at the threshold that is the ultimate consequence of Jesus' divine identity: each character is brought to the threshold, and in the course of dialogical interaction with Jesus—directly or indirectly—makes a life-changing decision based on their response to, and understanding of, who Jesus is. Simultaneously, the hearing-reader is also called into dialogic interaction at the threshold. However, what becomes apparent is that the christological significance of Jesus is repeatedly missed by characters at the threshold. Thus, even those who sometimes respond positively (such as the disciples) will be engaged in a continuing process of being taken to the threshold into dialogic interaction. Minor characters (and especially the unnamed ones) may tend to respond more positively, but they engage in one encounter that does not imply subsequent testing of their faith-response. Although interindividuality is apparent, these characters therefore have a limited function compared with other characters. The disciples may not understand, but they do not reject Jesus in the way that the Jewish leaders do. Even the disastrous collapse of the discipleship narrative is not final; the ending of Mark calls the disciple (within and without the text) to return to the threshold at which discipleship begins.

As a last, but never final word, it is apparent that hearing-readers of this study will continue to find themselves at the threshold of Mark's Gospel. The continuing quest for a more 'satisfying' explanation of the abrupt ending of Mark, the search for a single generic paradigm of the gospel, and the predominant preference for seeing the Markan centurion as expressing a faith confession, are just some of the ways in which hearing-readers want to finalise Mark. Arguably the most important 'threshold' that this study claims to have uncovered is that characters in Mark—like the Markan ending—cannot readily be finalised. Hopefully, neither will this study. Instead, the dialogue that it may hopefully provoke will make evident the necessity for hearing-readers to remain with Mark at the threshold.

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* The translation by Rotsel is considered inferior to the more recent one by Emerson; all quotations, therefore, are taken from the Emerson translation, and the standard abbreviation refers solely to it.

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